

whenever, however, wherever

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by [TheSilverQueen](#)

Summary

Will is the vampire lord and master, and therefore is entitled to a human sacrifice to sate his thirst whenever he desires. His favorite method of drinking is to edge his human pets until just on the cusp of orgasm and then enjoy their delicious, flavorful, hormone-drenched blood before doing it all over again. It's certainly not his fault if some of them break under the pressure; humans are so fragile, after all. It's why they lost the war, and why they owe Will a sacrifice whenever he comes calling.

This time, Verger Village offers Will a freshly-caught selkie to play with, and Will is more than happy to accept. The selkie refuses to acknowledge or speak to Will, but Will doesn't mind - the selkie doesn't need to speak in order for Will to introduce it to its brand new life as Will's pet.

Notes

This is my entry for [Bottom Hannibal Day](#)! Many thanks to grantaress for putting this together.

Warnings: I was in a pretty angry mood when I started this fic, and therefore Will is uh... pretty dark, compared to what I usually write. Like he is absolutely set in the mindset that he is lord and master, and Hannibal's life as a free being is over, so Hannibal must bow to him in every single thing no matter what. So yeah, this crosses pretty far into dubcon territory. Also a whole bunch of kinks fell in, sorry, just got a little clumsy when I went to sprinkle in the kink spice and knocked in the whole shaker.

Inspired by: I drew inspiration from Castlevania, Game of Thrones, Supernatural, and a few other things I'm forgetting. And toffeecape's amazing selkie fic, please go read that too. (No I will never stop screeching about [All I Need Is A Stream](#))

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Will does not consider himself kind, although he knows many of his kin do. They call him soft, accuse him of forgetting himself, or worse of all, threaten to take his territory and prove that they – and not him – are the true pinnacle of vampirism.

Will usually quells those threats immediately, and as a result his territory now stretches far enough that it would take him three days to race from one end to the other, even vampire speed. Nowadays, most vampires are smart enough to keep their opinions to themselves, although Will knows for a fact that most whisper behind his back that he remains soft as an overripe tomato and indulges his human slaves too much, like a king who grows lazy and fat and allows his underlings to grow lazy and fat in turn.

It's even funnier given that Will is frozen in time, exactly the same as he was when he was first turned all those centuries ago, and therefore incapable of growing fat.

He is, however, capable of growing lazy, which is probably why others think he is soft. Will doesn't agree though. He sees no reason to spend hours and hours hunting like the days of old when he can just roll up to any one of the villages in his territory and demand a snack to sate his thirst. After all, just as humans have different cravings, so do vampires, and while many of his kin enjoy the sharp tang of lemon-lime fear or the spicy hot burn of rage, Will prefers a gentler, smoother vintage. The slow burn of lust is almost comparable to sweet tang of cinnamon apple pie, and even though Will can no longer properly digest human food, he still likes to savor the memory.

Besides, most of the humans in Will's territory see it as a fairly equal exchange. Once a month, he calls upon a village or town and they present him with one of their members to carry off into the night and do whatever he likes, and in return he doesn't bother them for a while, protects them from other vampires trying to poach his territory, and ensures that they are properly provisioned in terms of food, water, and whatever else they might need to survive. Will sometimes even returns the sacrifice, if he feels kind. As a result, Will is certainly feared, for he has no patience for revolts or riots, but he spends far, far less time trying to prevent his snacks from running away like some of his neighbors.

In short: Will's system works and has worked for over a century, and no matter what his fellow vampires hiss about him behind his back, he isn't inclined to change it.

Tonight, Will is calling upon Verger Village. It's one of his favorite places to visit, since the village is located squarely between the rolling meadows and the coast that marks the end of Will's territory. It's large enough that Will can take snacks almost whenever he wants without destabilizing the village's population, and the blood flavor of the humans who dwell there is absolutely exquisite, blessed with the rich edge of fatty fish and equally fatty pork. More importantly, the village was constructed in the shadow of the Summer Castle, a great big behemoth commissioned by the vampire who dwelt in this territory before Will wandered in as he was passing through, was rather rudely attacked, and was annoyed enough to rip the vampire's head off in return. He'd freed most of the village's founders from the Summer Castle's dungeons, since he couldn't possibly eat them all and they were practically skin and bones, and thus the Summer Castle looming in the distance is a constant reminder of why the

village honors him. It makes it easier to demand a snack when a reminder of the fate they could have faced is just on the cliffs above.

Plus the views of the Summer Castle overlooking the ocean and the plains are spectacular. Will really can't fault the taste of the vampire he murdered, even if he was rude about everything else.

Normally Will travels on foot, because horses are skittish around vampires, but he understands the need for pageantry. There's a reason that he tolerates having a court in his territory, even if he would honestly rather burn all the underlings there and happily rule by himself, and most of that reason is so that the court's underlings can do the busy work of preparing a palanquin or horse-drawn carriage for Will to ride down to a village. He even has a special assistant who prepares Will's clothing and his crown and his jewels, so that all Will has to do when he wants a snack is to wake up, tell his assistant he wants one, and then slip into his clothes and walk down to the courtyard to be ferried to whatever village happens to be closest.

Will's robes are beautiful tonight, rich purples and gold, with a crown set with sapphires and diamonds from the mines below the Summer Castle. His palanquin is spacious and richly decorated inside and out, and Will gets to happily doze on enormous pillows as he is slowly carried down the hill.

One of the lower underlings goes ahead, on foot, so that Will doesn't have to wait a single second at the village gates. By the time the palanquin has reached the village center and Will emerges to seat himself under the great towering tree he once planted decades ago, the village has been informed and chosen a sacrifice, although of course they take a few minutes to make sure the sacrifice is properly prepared for him.

The leader of Verger Village is a twitchy man named Mason. He's annoying and overly familiar, although Will's guards keep him from getting too close, which is a blessing.

"My lord!" he cries, fumbling with his cloak. "My lord, you honor us with your presence!"

Will hums and taps a finger on the tree. He'd planted it when the village was founded, as he does for every village in his territory, and over the years the tree has grown hale and hearty, with the roots twisting just so to form a little throne of sorts. "I would be more honored if you could hand over my sacrifice quickly," Will replies dryly. "I did not come here to make conversation, Mason Verger."

Mason beams, a sickly smile that makes Will think of rats scrambling at the bottom of a barrel. He mops at the sweat on his brow and says, "We have a most – a most excellent sacrifice today! Freshly caught, and of course just for you."

Will narrows his eyes. Vampires can drain the blood of sea creatures as well as land creatures, but just because he can doesn't mean he wants to. "Do not try my patience, Mason," he warns. "I have come for a proper sacrifice, and I will have it, even if it means I have to drag you back to the Summer Castle kicking and screaming."

Will won't, of course – even he has standards for dinner – but the threat has the intended effect, because Mason visibly trembles. He's like his father, so full of bravado . . . right up until Will steps neatly in his space and stabs him in the gut. Will had let Verger senior bleed out on the castle ramparts, and his underlings had made quick work of the free snack. Will's honestly not sure why the village even allowed Mason to become the new leader, but human politics are not his problem so long as the village itself survives.

Fortunately for Mason's continued survival, a team of humans turns onto the far end of the square at that moment. They are pushing some sort of contraption, and at the end of it, someone is hanging, neatly bound. It's a tad more dramatic than Will prefers, but he's hungry enough to take whatever he is given.

As they come closer, Will can make out more details. The contraption is a long crane set upon wheels, with one poor soul dangling from the giant hook set at the end of the crane. The person isn't struggling, surprisingly, but they are swaying gently as the team of humans struggles to push the crane forward, and when the breeze picks up, Will's nose floods with a scent unlike any he's ever smelled before.

It's fish, but not like fish consumed for a recent meal; this is richer and deeper and fattier, like it's a part of the person. It's salt, but not like processed salt from deeper mines; this is fresh, like salt straight from recently boiled ocean water. It's cinnamon and fresh pressed paper and an impending thunderstorm, and Will is thirsty.

The sacrifice isn't even ugly, as some are. His hair is in disarray, but his face is pleasingly shaped and his body is well muscled. Of course, the best wine in an ugly cup would still taste the same to Will's enhanced senses, but an aesthetically pleasing vessel makes the experience all the sweeter when Will feeds. This sacrifice will look absolutely *wonderful* in the tower dungeon of the Summer Castle, with the raging ocean from one window and the green meadows in the other, and it almost makes Will want to demand his assistant find a painter to capture the beauty before Will drains the poor man dry and returns his body to nature.

When the crane finally comes to a halt, the man is still swaying, ever so slightly, and Will's curiosity ratchets up even higher when he realizes that the team of humans is backing away from the crane and the sacrifice with fear in their eyes. Usually, it's regret.

Will turns to Mason for an answer. "Well, carry on," he says. "Introduce me to my dinner."

Mason beams even more, like a child bringing a dead frog to his parent, and walks with jaunty, proud steps to the crane. He grabs a dangling strap from the cloth bundle restraining the man and yanks on it, so that the man stops swaying and slowly begins to turn to face Will. Then he announces, "Tonight, you will feast upon a delicacy that no other village could have provided! We have spent months preparing for your arrival, and only the hard work and, of course, excellent leadership of yours truly could have procured this rare treat for you! But we did so with joy in our hearts, for you are our Vampire Lord, our savior and our protector, and we will honor you until the day we die!"

Will sighs and inspects a fingernail. "I'd be more honored if you would get on with it."

“Of – of course,” Mason squeaks. He clears his throat. “This is a selkie, my lord! Freshly caught for you to feast upon! And we have its skin, so that you may feast as long as you wish.”

Whispers break out amongst Will’s entourage; vampires can be horrible gossips. Will quells the soft noises with a single raised hand, and then he sits forward and smiles at Mason, an awful smile that he knows makes humans want to run . . . or makes them wet themselves.

“Now, now, Mason,” Will says, sweet as freshly baked pie, “you wouldn’t be lying to your lord and savior, would you? You do know how I feel about lying.”

It’s not impossible to lie to a vampire, of course, if you can keep your heart steady, your sweat controlled, your eyes clear. But Will had been unbeatable at telling lies from truth when he was human, and that gift has gotten only better now that he has vampire senses to aid him. And when you live a few centuries, you lose patience for the pretty trappings of lies.

Mason squeals like a shot pig as Will’s guards seize him and lift him clear off his feet. “No, no, I swear!” he babbles as they drag him up towards Will. “I swear – he was caught yesterday – naked as the day he was born on the shoreline – I have the skin – please – I can prove it!”

“Then please,” Will says, “prove it.”

“Margot!” Mason yells, squirming in the unyielding grasp of Will’s guards. “Margot, cut its neck so that our lord and savior can smell it!”

A young woman steps out from the crowd. She’s beautifully dressed, with a dress the color of rich butter and the brilliant spring sun, but her shoulders shake as she approaches. She has the proper fear of Will, but at least she has the spine her brother lacks. She accepts a sharp knife from the nearest guard and steps up to the swaying man, setting the knife to his neck with the practiced movements of a skilled butcher.

Almost too practiced, although Will does not stop her; Margot would hardly be the first human to try and “save” a sacrifice from Will. It doesn’t really matter, of course, because if the sacrifice bleeds out, Will can just take a new one.

Mason, however, isn’t so far gone that he doesn’t notice. “Don’t bleed him dry!” he shouts. “Just – Just a little – a *little* cut, so that our Lord can smell him!”

Even from his spot in the tree, Will can see the way Margot grinds her teeth. The sacrifice hanging in the tree tilts his head and makes eye contact with her, and something passes between them, because Margot’s shoulder slump down and her arm relaxes, and when she draws away again, only a small cut has been placed onto the man’s neck, just enough that blood begins to run down his throat, so that all can see and smell the rich iron of his blood.

It’s utterly intoxicating, tinged with the flavor of something more powerful than any human, but Will’s too old to believe based on a word and a little nick. He yawns, deliberately, and then tells Mason, “Appealing, but of course, any human can be fed any number of potions to smell appealing. I am going to need more proof than that, or on your head be it.”

“Its skin!” Mason says. “Its skin, we have it, please – please, my Lord!”

Another human breaks free from the crowd and scurries forward, a leather bag clutched in his sweaty hands. He deposits it at the base of the tree, shaking like a leaf in the wind under the glare of Will’s guards, and all but runs back to the crowd. Mason shakes an arm free and points at it with fevered desperation, so Will finally sighs and stands to walk slowly down the ground to verify Mason’s claims.

One of his guards unties the bag and upends it into Will’s waiting hands, and it is indeed a very luxurious pelt, smelling of salty ocean and fresh sand. Will might have dismissed it as a particular fine hunting trophy, but for two things: one, that the fur is dotted with scars here and there, and two, when he clasps his hands tight around it for examination, the sacrifice jerks and writhes from where he is bound and dangling.

Will brings the fur to his nose, closes his eyes, and inhales, and he *knows*. No human could ever smell like that, not even a half breed.

Will walks up to the bound man, who now stares placidly at him, apparently back in control. “You’re very far from home, if you are indeed a selkie,” Will says. He tilts his head. “How did they manage to catch you, I wonder.”

“I – ”

“I wasn’t asking you,” Will interrupts mildly, and there’s a thump as Will’s guards force Mason to his knees.

A flash of amusement goes through the man’s eyes; clearly he’s no more a fan of Mason than Will is. Other than that, though, he shows no emotion at all, and Will can’t smell much either, besides the rich tang of ocean. Will’s encountered other supernatural creatures, of course, but never one of the sea, and part of Will wants to crack him open and see just what makes him tick.

But the other part – the hungrier part, the part that awoke inside Will and propelled him out of his grave under the darkness of the new moon – that part just wants to *drink*.

Will reaches out and grabs the front of the man’s bindings. He’s close enough to the ground that all Will has to do in order to sniff at his neck is lean forward, and the man does Will a favor by not screaming or tensing up. A single lick at the blood running down his neck brings an explosion of flavors onto Will’s tongues, and it’s enough for Will to know that however this selkie was caught, Will is most definitely keeping him.

Will slings the pelt around his shoulders and steps back. As he relishes the sight of the man shuddering as Will manhandles his skin, Will announces, “I accept your sacrifice. We’ll be leaving now.”

Will’s guards release Mason Verger and let him fall to the ground with a thump. Mason begins babbling, but Will ignores him, because he’s got what he wants and honestly if Mason keeps annoying him, he might take two sacrifices and fling one of them over the ramparts

while he keeps the other to feast – and it won't be this new intoxicating toy who gets flung over the ramparts, either.

“My Lord?” one of Will's guards asks, nodding at the sacrifice.

“Cut him down,” Will says. “Tie him up as usual.”

“With you, my Lord, or walking?”

Will hums. Sometimes, when he feels kind, he likes to bring the sacrifice into the palanquin and chat with them. It helps to ease the fear, which makes for an easier meal. But sometimes Will also just likes to force them to walk, because it wears them out so they don't fight it when Will sinks his teeth in.

“No, let him walk,” Will decides. “Let him experience his first walk on land to his final home. After all, he won't be doing much walking there.”

His guards smirk, but they're efficient and obedient. By the time Will has settled back in the palanquin, they've cut the man down, bound his hands and legs, and leashed him to the palanquin, so that the man will be forced to walk or be dragged all the way to the Summer Castle. He's not wearing much, just a crude loincloth wrapped around his middle, and Will turns himself to get a comfortable view of his brand new pet. He even strokes the pelt again, just to see the man shiver, before he nods and the entire procession begins the long, long trek back to the Summer Castle.

Will's favorite spot to feed in the Summer Castle is the tallest tower, which is at the very heart of palace. It rises high into the sky, enough that a lesser human might become queasy, but it boasts spectacular views from large windows, a large fireplace, and one very spacious chamber. From what Will understands, the previous owner had liked to use the chambers as a private torture chamber, letting young vampire underlings who hadn't yet grown immune to the sun's rays bake in the morning rays or hanging human slaves out of the window to see how long it took them to die of exposure.

Will also uses it as a torture chamber, but a different kind of torture. The first thing he had done was clean the entire place up, and then he'd had a nice bath installed on one side of the fireplace and a very nice bed installed on the other. When he is alone, he can sit in the bed or the bath and be warmed by the fireplace as he drinks in the view. When he has company, Will can watch the golden flames dance off his pet's skin.

Like now, as Will settles back into his bed to watch as his underlings efficiently chain up his brand new pet.

The selkie managed to walk all the way back to the Summer Castle without falling once, although of course his feet had been dirty and bleeding freely by the time they had stopped. He'd also been faintly out of breath, gleaming with sweat, and so Will had ordered him properly cleaned before he was brought up to Will's private chambers.

He's still wet now, but he doesn't struggle as his wrists are attached to chains high in the ceiling and his legs fixed to bolts set into the ground. Possibly this is because Will's guards have more than a few weapons pointed at him, but the stoic expression on his face gives Will the impression that he really doesn't give a single damn about them all. Or maybe it's because he was drenched from head to toe in water; Will would likely be far more comfortable if he was captured and his captors drenched him head to toe in blood.

Will's guards are efficient though; in a few movements, the selkie is completely restrained, and completely at Will's mercy.

"Will that be all, my Lord?" one of them asks.

Will waves an errant hand. He doesn't micromanage his underlings anymore than he micromanages his humans, because it takes a lot of work for little reward. "Yes," he says absently, admiring the sleek musculature of his new pet. "Now leave me, I don't expect you'll see me for a few days."

"Yes, my Lord."

The door to the tower shuts with a definitive *boom*, and then they are alone.

Will leans forward. The selkie has yet to make eye contact with him, although Will has sensed his eyes roaming around the room, likely looking for methods of escape. He won't find many; Will is not quite the oldest of vampires, but he's old enough that his skin is as hard as a diamond and his speed can outmatch any creature on land. The chains that hold the selkie are also strong, a gift from Will's court sorcerer when she joined, and once sealed, their seams disappear. They can't be broken unless Will commands it.

And, of course, Will has this selkie's skin. He tugs it into his lap and strokes it, very slowly, and watches the selkie shiver ever so slightly, like a horse trying to subtly shake a fly.

"So then," Will says cheerfully. "We're alone. What's your name, selkie of the sea?"

The selkie remains steadfastly silent. He doesn't even blink.

Will sighs. Normally, he tries to engage in some conversation with his pets and sacrifices. Fear adds a really unpleasant tang, bitter and sharp like dandelions and too rich cocoa, and it's easy to take that fear away if Will starts chatting, gets to know them, and reassure them that he won't gruesomely tear them apart like they've heard in stories around the campfire. In fact, most times Will lets his sacrifices go, minus a week or two of their life and some of the blood, although most times he drops them off in a new village so they can start a new life, because most old villages might shun them.

But this selkie shows no fear, and when Will inhales, he tastes no apprehension in the air. Just the salt of sweat and the spice of the ocean.

Will is hungry, though, and the sun is setting, so he has little patience. He sighs and gets to his feet, pushing aside the pelt with one last stroke to admire its beautiful softness before he gets off the bed. The selkie doesn't move as Will approaches, although his eyes do narrow, so

slightly that someone without vampire eyesight might not see. He does inhale when Will shreds the knot holding his loincloth together, though, leaving him naked as a newborn babe.

He steps away to chest at the foot of the bed and digs out the oil, sweet and smooth and laced with the most potent aphrodisiac Will's sorcerer could conjure. There are other fun toys in the chest too, but Will usually waits until the second or third night to break those out.

"I'm not going to torture you," Will reassures the selkie as he oils up his hands. "But I am a vampire, and I am thirsty, and you have something I need."

The selkie tilts his head, almost the exact same way he greeted Margot's knife, and there is that same expression again, that calm, that *curiosityscent* – it's indescribable, like the ocean is right in front of Will, salt and wind and rain, and Will is suddenly so, so grateful for Verger Village.

"I am glad you were caught," Will confesses quietly. "You're a very fine specimen, you know. Oh, I'm going to have so much fun with you."

The selkie's mouth parts, and harsh breaths wheeze out of him. His legs tense and twitch, trying to move, but the chains hold him fast. His hands curl into fists and he yanks, but he can't get free. He is Will's, utterly and completely, and the only way he'd be more Will's is if Will put him under a thrall and made him a slave in mind as well as body.

That's far less fun, though.

"Almost there," Will says, and speeds up even more. He's not averse to using vampire speed to play with his pets, and the selkie is responding so beautifully, after all. He can practically *taste* the selkie's impending orgasm, and –

Right as the orgasm is on the precipice, right as release is about to crash through the selkie's system, right as the selkie is just about to come –

Will lets him go, and sinks his fangs deep into the selkie's neck.

The selkie does not scream or struggle or cry. His hips jerk fruitlessly in the cold air, trying to gain more friction, but with the pain of Will's bite, his orgasm is already retreating, leaving him cold and pent up.

It's absolutely *delicious*. It's the most amazing taste in the world. It's the reason Will has spent so, so long learning to hone his seduction and sexual skills, this beautiful moment right before orgasm when his pets are brimming with arousal and desperation and joy – but not before they overflow, and become absolutely drowning in it.

By the time Will has drunk his fill, the selkie is panting hard and trembling minutely, but more importantly he's soft and utterly incapable of getting himself to orgasm.

Will pulls back, wipes at his lips, and smiles. "Well!" he says, and claps. "That was just what I needed, thank you very much."

Will then washes up in silence, enjoying the little clinks of the chain and the racing heartbeat of the selkie. Post feeding always makes him rather haphazard and soft, like a human on too much wine; it's why he makes sure his pets are quite well secured, so they can't take advantage of his dulled reflexes to scamper free. And what a tragedy it would be, if this pet got free.

As Will heads towards the door, he scoops up the pelt and slings it around his shoulders, like a very soft cape. "Enjoy your new home, my pet," he calls over his shoulder. "With a taste like that, oh – I think I'll keep you forever."

And then he slams the door shut, and turns the key in the lock, and heads to bed.

Will is an older vampire, old enough to stand in the full heat of the midday sun and not get burnt, and so he does not need to feed as much as a newer vampire might. He understands his thirst, and he controls it – with younger vampires or feral ones, it controls them, often to their detriment. That being said, it does not harm Will to indulge the way it might harm a human to indulge; Will can drink as much blood as he likes without suffering ill effect.

That is to say – he spends quite a few days drinking from his new pet on a daily basis, and sometimes even twice a day.

The selkie still steadfastly refuses to speak or make eye contact, however, no matter what Will says. It's slightly confusing to Will – he'd probably talk to the captor who was jerking him off yet denying him orgasm every day in a tower dungeon – but then again, every type of supernatural creature has its own society, its own norms, its own set of rules. Maybe selkies just don't talk to outsiders.

Will doesn't really *need* the selkie to talk, after all. He just needs him to get horny and desperate enough to be best tasting blood for miles around.

Still, that doesn't stop Will from trying, because he likes conversation every once in a while. One day, after he arrives, instead of heading straight for a jerk off and a feed, Will heads to the bed instead. He pulls back the curtains, letting the golden rays of the setting sun illuminate his too-still pet, and then clambers on top of the bed to nestle comfortably against the pillows. The selkie watches his movements with wary eyes, thighs tense, but he doesn't talk.

Will smirks and lays out the pelt in his lap, and begins to stroke it, very gently. "You must think yourself very strong," he comments. "Strong and fearless, able to hold up in the face of torture and pain. Possibly you might even think you can escape. I should assure you that isn't the case."

The selkie tilts his head, ever so slightly. He shuffles one foot, almost like a dog pawing at the ground, or perhaps a horse ready to charge.

"See those chains? My sorcerer made them from me," Will explains. "Once they shut, the seams knit themselves together, so they become unbreakable. And they're made of cold iron; all of the supernatural strength in the world won't shatter them. Those chains have held

hundreds of people before you, pet, and they'll likely hold a hundred more. But you know what sets you apart from them? Aside from the whole being a creature of the sea, of course." Will leans forward. "They all eventually deigned to make conversation with me. And, in due course, I released most of them. So. Are you going to tell me your name?"

A gleam goes through the selkie's eyes, there and gone in a flash, the same amusement he'd had when he faced Mason in the village. It annoys Will, being in the same category as that human piece of scum, and so he sighs.

Time for plan B, then.

"Now, I must admit," Will says casually, "I don't actually know much about selkies. I've really spent more of my time learning about land creatures, because they might actually pose a danger to me. But I *do* know that your pelt is precious, and that you always can feel it, because it's part of you. Of course, the fact that you twitch every time I touch it is a dead giveaway too. So – and do let me know if I'm overstepping the boundaries here – allow me to indulge in a little . . . experiment."

The selkie, predictably, says nothing.

That's okay – Will was planning on going ahead whether the selkie said something or nothing, because he is indeed curious.

He sets the pelt to the side and moves to stand on the floor. For court life, Will dresses as he is expected to dress: the perfectly pressed pants, the well shined shoes, the immaculate shirt. On his own, he much prefers looser, simpler garments, and so now it is very simply to unlace his knee-length shift and let it fall in a loose circle around his feet. Perhaps a human might be shy, but Will sees no shame in his nakedness, and given that the selkie hasn't had a stitch of clothing on his entire time in Will's tower, it only seems fair.

Very aware of the selkie's curious eyes, Will slides back on the bed and returns to his nest of pillows. The bed is covered in the finest silks, the softest pillows, the most decadent sheets, and yet when Will pulls the pelt over his lap, they all seem rather coarse and unrefined in comparison.

Will grasps a handful of the pelt and folds it between his spread legs, and very, very gently, begins to tease himself to hardness.

"You see," Will says, closing his eyes and letting his head drop against the pillows, "I think you have a very sensitive nose – most of us superior creatures do, compared to humans. I think you can probably smell this pelt no matter where I take it. And I think you need it, if you ever are to properly escape. So I'm curious: what will you do if it smells only of me?"

For a long moment, there is only silence. The selkie doesn't even seem to breathe, although perhaps his kind don't need to.

Then, as Will really begins to harden and quicken his thrusts, smearing himself all over the pelt and humping his hips against the pelt, he hears the telltale *clink-clink-clink* of the chains, and his next moan comes out of a pleased smile.

“You feel *exquisite*, selkie,” Will gasps, seizing a new corner of the pelt to rub against himself. “Oh, it’s wonderful, almost as good as your blood. I might even moan your name as I come – if I knew it.”

The chains rattle, and when Will slits open his eyes, he sees the selkie is straining forward, all prior stoicism forgotten. Oh, certainly, there isn’t much emotion in his face at all, but his teeth are bared, his arms and legs are shaking against the chains, and, most importantly of all, he is hard and leaking, beautifully illuminated by the setting sun.

Will slows down, just to make sure every inch of the pelt smells like him. And, quite honestly, to collect to his thoughts, for Will rarely engages in sex with his food and never with his underlings, and so it’s been a long time since he’s enjoyed the adrenaline high of a beautiful orgasm. It’s worth the slight delay in coming to see the selkie so visibly affected, either because Will is using his pelt or because the selkie can smell Will’s arousal in the air. He’s sure he smells equally appealing to a fellow supernatural creature.

“Are you going to tell me what name I should scream when I come, my pet?” Will asks slyly.

The selkie stares at his lap, eyes hungry, but then he swallows, visibly, and closes his mouth. Slowly, he brings his feet back down and stops straining against the chains, and Will can almost see him trying to regain control of himself.

Will’s about to crush that dream.

“Too bad,” Will sighs, and speeds up again. This time he doesn’t stop, letting the orgasm crash right through him and making no effort to stopper the sinful sounds coming out of his mouth. He also continues to rub himself against the pelt, thoroughly marking it, until the sensation becomes a bit less pleasant and starts to edge towards oversensitive. When he finally stops, he relaxes against the bed and lets his breathing return to normal, admiring the way his come decorates the fur of the pelt.

He counts to five, very slowly, and then pushes himself to his feet. The selkie startles, ever so slightly, as he approaches, and Will grins as he realizes the selkie is still hard and leaking, still so visibly affected by Will. It’s nice to be appreciated.

“Let me make this very clear, pet,” Will says affectionately, because the sooner the selkie accepts it, the better both of their lives will be. “From the moment we met, you were mine, and I never let go of what is mine. This body?” he says, stroking a hand down the selkie’s chest. “It’s mine.” He points at the come-covered pelt on the bed. “That pelt? It’s mine.” He reaches down and grabs the selkie where he is still hard, and says, even softer, “This? It’s mine. You would do well to learn that there is no escape from me, not ever, and you would do well not to annoy me, either. I don’t *need* to give you the venom that makes everything nice and floaty and faraway, pet. I can bite you and leave you in agony, if I desire. I don’t think you want that, do you?”

The selkie inhales, slow and deep, and closes his eyes.

Will sighs. “Have it your way then,” he says, because apparently selkies are stubborn beasts.

Will strokes the selkie a few more times, just to get those delicious hormones flowing again and to hear the telltale hitch of pleasure in the selkie's throat, and then he sinks fluidly to his knees. He's been feeding from the selkie's neck for the past week, but honestly, the neck isn't the only place where delicious veins and arteries congregate to make a veritable vampire feast. And Will has learned, through trial and error, that he needs to spread his bites out and give his pets a rest, lest he open a wound that takes magic to truly heal.

"Bon appétit to me," Will murmurs, and sinks his fangs right into the selkie's inner thigh.

The selkie does not scream, but he does release a short, cut-off sound of shock and pain, and Will enjoys it almost as much as the blood coursing into his mouth.

Two weeks – and many orgasms from Will and denied ones to the selkie – later, and the selkie still refuses to speak, tell Will his name, or even make proper eye contact, and Will is honestly contemplating cutting out the selkie's tongue. He even tells the selkie, point blank, while taking a bath, and the selkie merely shifts in his chains as if to say *Do your worst*. It's utterly infuriating.

Fortunately for the selkie, Alana comes to his defense.

"He's harder to crack than a coconut!" Will complains. "I've done everything that normally works, Alana. I've allowed him food and water, I've had him bathed, I've talked to him. Hell, I even let him see me drunk and dizzy post feeding. He still won't speak!"

Alana suppresses a smile, although just barely. Will allows it of her, and no one else, because for one thing, she's his most loyal subordinate and his right hand woman, and for another, she's a succubus with enough magical power to vaporize every vampire in the castle. He's seen it firsthand; the first time they had met, she'd been tied to a burning stake, screaming in rage, as she vaporized every single townspeople who had tried to have her burnt. She hadn't even been singed, but the poor girl she'd been trying to protect had been charcoal by then, and Will had offered her a place in his court on the spot.

And possibly begged her on his knees. If only to avoid her vaporizing him too when she caught sight of him.

Will can still banter with her, though. "You think it's funny, don't you?" he accuses.

Alana takes another sip of her wine and lets her smile come to full force. "Will, no sacrifice has dared to defy you in centuries. I would have thought you would enjoy the challenge."

"I can't even moan his name when I come because I don't know it!"

Alana raises one perfect eyebrow. "Oh it's like that, is it?"

"Don't you start," Will warns. Then he sighs and pulls the pelt off of his back, where he's taken to wearing it as a cloak. It's still as soft as the day he first laid hands on it, and although it smells strongly of Will now, it still retains the smell of the ocean and the selkie who shed it. "Just feel that, Alana. And then imagine what it's like to rub against it and come."

“Amazing,” Alana murmurs, brushing a careful hand down the pelt. “An intact pelt from an alive selkie. I don’t think I’ve ever heard of such a thing.”

“We’d be able to get more information if he would open his damn mouth,” Will grumbles.

“Maybe he’s under a curse? Did you check for that?”

“A curse? Sure. You put up wards, remember?”

Alana sighs and taps a fingernail on the table. “Not against you, silly,” she says affectionately. “On him. Maybe selkies lose their voice when they assume human form. You know, like the tales of old.”

“Ohhhh, that kind of curse.”

Will gathers up the pelt and leans back in his chair. On one hand, Alana’s seen far worse than one butt naked man. On the other hand, Alana is a succubus, and if the selkie is tempting to Will, he’s likely tempting to Alana.

Then again, maybe the selkie just hates men. Maybe he’ll respond to a woman.

“You know what, I haven’t had him checked for that kind of curse,” Will says thoughtfully. “You wanna come and see him, Alana? I have to warn you, he’s naked, but he is fully restrained.”

“With you, they’re always naked,” Alana says dryly, and finishes her wine.

“Hey!”

Fortunately, the minute Alana enters the tower and sees the selkie, her eyebrow goes up. And, well, Will hasn’t worked with Alana for decades not to know every single quirk of her body language.

“I told you he was beautiful,” Will says smugly, and goes to sit on the bed with the pelt.

“He’s very nice,” Alana says diplomatically. She walks in a small, slow circle around the selkie, lingering appreciatively over his torso and his bum, and Will settles back to watch her work. And to watch the selkie, of course, who can’t actually turn around but is certainly trying to do so without giving away the game.

Alana pauses, just once, when she is at his back. “My Lord?”

Will sits up straight, frowning, because Alana only addresses him like among company or when there’s a serious issues. “Is he cursed?”

“ . . . I can’t see any signs, but I’ll run another test. I’m actually concerned about this brand. Did you approve this?”

“A what?”

Sure enough, when Will gets to his feet and hurries around to see the selkie's back, there is a brand there, large and ugly and burned into the selkie's skin like a stamp on a heifer. The logo means nothing in the grand scheme of things, because Will is the lord here and only his sigil matters, but that doesn't mean Will is unfamiliar with who claims ownership of a shield with a rearing boar topped with an king's crown.

"Verger," Will snarls under his breath. He can see it so clearly; if he hadn't come demanding a sacrifice, Mason likely would have kept this selkie as a bargaining chip, pushing other villagers further under his thumb and carving slices off for his amusement.

Alana tilts her head. She knows Mason, of course. She knows every village or town leader in Will's territory, because it's her job to know. Her voice is very cool as she asks, "Would you like me to exact punishment for this, my Lord?"

Will reaches out and traces the top edge of the brand. It's healed, because supernatural creatures have a higher healing rate than humans, but it's definitely still new, and it displeases Will.

And what displeases Will doesn't tend to exist for very long.

"I've got a better idea," Will says. He looks to Alana. "I assume you can heal it, if I ask you. But can you transfer it to someone?"

"I can do some research," Alana answers slowly. "But most likely, yes."

"Excellent. You have my permission to do anything necessary to learn if this is possible."

"Of course, my Lord."

Alana then raises her hands, and Will can see the telltale golden glow in her eyes as she manifests her magic. She wouldn't dare harm him, of course, but he doesn't really want to get in her way, either, so he takes one last look at the brand and then hurries back to the safety of the bed.

The selkie bears Alana's magical examination with the same silent stoicism of Will's rather thorough physical examinations, but in the end, the result of the same.

"He is under no curse," Alana pronounces a few minutes later, letting her hands drop. "Nor is his tongue or throat or voice deformed. He just doesn't want to speak to you, my Lord."

Will sighs. "Well, it was a worth checking out. Thank you, Alana."

"Of course, my Lord," Alana says, dipping her head respectfully. She steps away from the selkie and goes to pick up her cloak, because for all of Will's favor towards her, this is still Will's sanctuary and she, like everyone else, knows better than to linger when she is not needed. Will doesn't barge into her little potions room, after all; the last fool who ventured in there when she had not expressly invited them had touched a flask and been instantly disintegrated. Still, Will doesn't miss how her eyes linger on the selkie – on his long legs, his

muscled chest, his sharp cheekbones – and, well. Will's not the only creature in the castle who could feed very, very well off this selkie.

“Hey, Alana,” Will says as she turns to leave.

“Yes?”

“Are you hungry?”

Alana puts her hands on her hips. “Will, we already learned that you and I are not – ”

“Yes, yes, no need to bring that up,” Will interrupts hastily, because the less said about his aborted attempt at a fling with Alana, the better. He tilts his head to the selkie, who is looking at Alana curiously – actually looking at her, rather than the distant, roundabout way he looks at Will. “But I wasn't talking about me. How do you feel about playing with it? I assure you, the taste is . . . hmm, exquisite.”

“You know I don't drink blood.”

“You do bathe in it,” Will replies, because it's a running joke even if it's not true.

Alana smiles. She puts her cloak back down on the chair and turns to survey the selkie again, this time a little more critically. Her power curls around her arms and legs, little spirals of golden dust, just barely visible to the naked eye, and Will can feel her reaching out to the selkie, testing, testing, testing. She doesn't need to touch someone to feed – she can sate herself upon dreams as well as actual sex – but Will knows that she has never slept with a selkie, and it would be a once in a lifetime opportunity.

“Are you sure, my Lord?” Alana asks.

It's a valid question, because Will rarely, if ever, shares his toys. But, well.

“Absolutely,” Will answers. He lounges back in his bed, petting absently at the pelt and watching how the selkie looks between them with narrowed eyes, probably trying to figure out their relationship. “I think it would be a delightful thing to watch, Alana. And nothing would get my dinner more riled up than to dance on the end of a succubus, and you know how I do enjoy a very aroused meal.”

Alana taps a finger on her lips, looking thoughtful. For a moment, Will thinks she'll accept – but then the little spirals of magic fade away, and Alana shakes her head.

“No, my Lord,” Alana says. “I appreciate the offer, but I don't want to spoil your dinner. If I have my way, he might be too dazed to offer you anything. And I can always find someone else to play with. I can get you started, of course, if you desire?”

Will shrugs. “Do your worst.”

Alana steps forward again, confident as ever, and Will has to snicker as the selkie visibly pulls away from her. He doesn't pull enough to test the reach of the chains, probably because he is now very familiar with their unyielding strength, but Alana does have to get on her

tippy toes to actually reach his head. She grasps some of his hair and yanks it out in a quick motion, and then she cups her hands and brings them to her mouth. She says a quick murmured word and breathes out, and golden dust floats into the selkie's face.

The selkie blinks, visibly startled, and then Alana's power hits, and Will gets a front row seat to the way his eyes dilate and his heartbeat starts to race. In the time it takes for Alana to back away, pick up her coat, and open the door, the selkie is clearly affected, hips jerking to seek nonexistent friction, although Will does concede that they are tiny, tiny jerks.

"Will that be all, my Lord?" Alana asks.

Will nods dumbly, captivated by the sight of the now-frantic selkie. He's pulling on the chains now, eyes completely black, teeth bared, hard and leaking and wanting, and the scent – oh the scent is delicious.

Alana rolls her eyes. "Have fun, Will. Don't strain anything."

"Hey! That was only once!"

After the door shuts and Will hears the telltale click of the lock sliding across, so that he won't be disturbed, Will turns his attention back to the selkie. He's almost completely lost under Alana's formidable power, with his head thrown back, sweat gleaming on his skin, and the tiniest whimpers escaping his clenched teeth. If Will were human, he wouldn't have heard it, but he does.

Will slings the pelt around his shoulders, slides to his feet, and sashays to the selkie. When he reaches him, Will takes the selkie's chin in his hands and forces their eyes to meet, even if the selkie is clearly barely able to concentrate.

"I did warn you," Will says gently, very amused. "Ah, I did warn you. But – what's done is done. Are you going to tell me what name I should call you, pet?"

The selkie bares his teeth at Will. He doesn't snap, so it's not an attack; it's more a general statement Will has no problem understanding.

Will sighs and releases his chin. "You're so stubborn," he chides. "One day, I'll break you of it, but not today. Today I am hungry, pet. And look at this – a feast, just for me. Maybe I'll even let you come this time. If I feel kind."

It's easy then, so easy, to slip to his knees and push the selkie's legs apart. Will's had ages to sleep with all manner of humans and vampires, and the selkie, quite fortunately, has rather similar anatomy. The groans as Will licks up into his groin are music to Will's ears, as is the startled cry when Will slips a few fingers inside and seeks out the perfect spot. It's even better when Will gets his mouth on the selkie and can play him like an instrument, tormenting his prostate and his length with the immeasurable strength of a vampire who doesn't tire and doesn't need to breathe.

And when the selkie truly begins to succumb, well. Will never *promised* an orgasm.

So Will pulls away, and sinks his fangs into the selkie's upper thigh, and enjoys the meal while the selkie uselessly tries to chase the release that Will won't allow to come.

Afterwards, Will sits back on his haunches and admires the way the selkie sags in his chains. He's given up on controlling his breath or expression, at least, because Will can see the frustrated relief in his face despite his closed eyes, and he can also see the way the selkie's chest is heaving like a horse at the end of a marathon.

Will reaches up and pats the selkie's chest. "Maybe tomorrow," Will tells him cheerfully. "If you behave, and tell me your name. If not, well. I have been wanting to start testing how you react to my bounty of toys."

Will is many things, but an early riser is not one of them. He fought hard, very hard, for a place in the vampire world and a good territory and a fine castle, and so he enjoys to take it easy and sleep in after a good meal. His guards ensure that he is not disturbed short of an apocalypse, and it works out for everyone when Will is well-rested because then he's in a much better mood.

Therefore, when Alana comes in at the crack of midday and flings open the heavy-duty curtains that Will uses around his bed to keep the sunlight the way younger vampires might use a coffin, Will is most definitely Not Pleased.

"What the *hell*, Alana," Will growls at her, just barely holding back the urge to rip her apart.

He could indulge, of course. They'd both survive and heal. But it would most certainly be a right pain to fix everything that they might damage during the fight, because Alana is no pushover and she'd fight as good as she got. The last time they had sparred for fun, for example, they had leveled the Winter Castle, and Will hadn't even actually been trying to kill her.

Alana ignores his tone, because she knows she has his favor and also because she is quite literally walking on air. Her aura is out in full force, surrounding her with a magical glow like a full body halo, and Will does a double take because he's only seen that a few times.

He yawns. "Did you take up my offer to feed on the selkie?"

"What? No," Alana says, laughing. She's flitting all over the damn room as she speaks, so clearly she's fed off of someone, but Will doesn't make a habit of getting into his underlings' feeding choices and he won't start now. "I mean, I did have dinner, but not with him, and during dinner I was thinking of him, so I decided to check some of the old grimoires that we collected and stored when we took over the castle and –"

Will sort of loses track of what Alana goes off about, mostly because it gets into really technical stuff and also because he really doesn't want to think about most the nasty artifacts they'd recovered while cleaning out the castle. Will is a vampire and cannot actually throw up, but some of the things they found made him want to, including the grimoires, which Will is pretty sure he remembers Alana saying were made of tanned vampire skin, written with demon blood, and bound with human hair. Either way, Alana usually remembers herself in a

few minutes and gets to the point, so he just rolls onto his front, sets his chin on his hands, and nestles into the soft pelt beneath him.

“ – And you’re not paying any attention to me, are you?” Alana realizes abruptly.

Will yawns again. “Right you are. Can we get to the point?”

Alana pouts, but she stops floating in the air and turns the book around in her hands so Will can see what exactly has her so excited. “Selkie society is notoriously secretive,” she explains to Will. “But one thing we do know is that politeness is *very* highly valued, Will. To the point where not properly introducing yourself in the correct manner can be asking for a fight to the death.”

“ . . . And?”

Alana sighs and slaps him – gently – on the head. “And did you introduce yourself as Will, Vampire Lord of the Graham territory, and then politely ask him for his name?”

“Uh, no.”

“Well, then, get to it, my Lord. If you ever want him to acknowledge you before the end of the world, that is.”

On his way up to visit his selkie, Will snags the meal tray from one of his underlings. He’s not a vampire who likes to starve his dinner and gloat over their weakened bodies, and so he ensures that each of his pets are well fed and well watered. This selkie has been eating food fit for a king, like most of Will’s court, and as far as he knows there haven’t been any problems with escape attempts or spitting back food, so he opts to have an easy reason to visit, so as not to arouse his pet’s suspicion.

The selkie is, perhaps, wise to his tricks, though, because when Will enters and says a cheery hello, brandishing the meal tray, the selkie huffs very quietly in amusement.

“Yeah, yeah, laugh it up,” Will mutters to himself, and places the meal tray on the chest at the foot of the bed. It’s all finger food, cut neatly into small bites for easy feeding, and a glass of water and juice, and candied pineapple for dessert. Will can no longer digest human food, but he can taste the flavors in his pets, and so the kitchens usually opt to fill the meal trays with things Will liked when he was human – whether or not his pets actually like them.

But, no matter. Today, Will is going to get a name out of his selkie, or he is going to have Alana vaporize it.

Will spins around and walks towards the selkie, stopping a polite distance apart – enough so that they could shake hands, if his selkie was not bound. He smiles, inclines his head, and says, “I’ve been remiss in introducing myself; you must forgive my rudeness. I am Will, Vampire Lord of the Graham territory. May I have the pleasure of knowing to whom I am speaking?”

The selkie's eyes sharpen, then, as if he is trying to see the bait in the trap. He shifts his weight from leg to leg, testing and thinking, before he finally inhales slowly and wets his lips.

"You are forgiven, for you could not know our ways," the selkie says. "I am Hannibal of Lithuania, Master of the Lecters."

The selkie's voice is a bit rough, perhaps because he has not spoken in a while, but it has a very nice accent, and Will almost wants to bite his throat and see if he can taste it. But he contains himself, for that would be rude, and holds out a hand instead.

"Pleasure to make your acquaintance."

Hannibal eyes him with amusement, but eventually he shifts forward, just enough to brush his chest against Will's hand, the closest approximation to a handshake. It's enough for Will.

Will tilts his head back at the tray. "Are you hungry? If this isn't to your liking, I can have the kitchen make you whatever you would like."

"And if what I desire is not procurable in human lands?"

Will shrugs. "My kind don't need to breathe. We could always go exploring in the sea. I'm sure if you give us enough details, we could find something."

Hannibal smiles, too wide, like a predator just after prey has been successfully caught. "You are very quick to volunteer your subordinates. Are you sure they would obey? The sea is a dangerous place, Vampire Lord Will of the Graham territory," he purrs.

"Yes, they would obey. I am Lord here, and what I say goes. Haven't you learned that already?"

"My name was given, not commanded."

"I could have commanded it. Or do you think that my sorcerer's ability is limited to mere minor aphrodisiac spells and pretty lights?"

Hannibal inclines his head, accepting the point, but the fire in his eyes does not die, and it thrills Will. He much prefers his pets lively, for broken crying ones are no fun at all. "She is a formidable sorcerer, indeed. Generally my kind are resistant to magic."

"Yes, water has a diluting effect," Will acknowledges. "But Alana grew up near the sea; she long ago learned to compensate. And if someone is willing, well . . . it makes giving in all the easier. May I?"

Fortunately for his tongue's continued existence, Hannibal accepts the food Will offers without a fight. He does refuse one sandwich, but Will can smell the edge of burnt meat and it's understandable that a creature of the sea is wary of too much fire. He also allows Will to hold the glass to his mouth and let him drink, giving Will only one suspicious eye roll when Will takes the opportunity to pet at the fine length of his neck to see if the skin is ready for more bites.

“So, tell me more about yourself,” Will invites, when most of the meal is demolished. He pours some water onto a cloth and pats gently at Hannibal’s mouth, cleaning the scraps and crumbs. “I’ve never heard of Lithuania – where is it?”

“You might have another name for it, if you even knew it existed,” Hannibal replies. “Lithuania is the name in my tongue for the great land in the cold waters, and the Lecters have been master of it for centuries.”

“You must be strong, to hold a territory for so long.”

“Yes, we are,” Hannibal says solemnly. “But the land is strong too, and does not tolerate weakness. Winters are particularly harsh, and it has swallowed up our heirs and enemies alike.”

There’s a wealth of pain in that comment. Will can hear it, even without looking straight at Hannibal. Hannibal would not be the first pet of Will’s to have lost family to death, and Will usually doesn’t probe. There’s a difference, Will has learned, between a pet learning to trust Will with their body and a pet learning to trust Will with their mind and soul, and rushing to the latter can only cause problems.

“I see,” Will says. He backs away, setting the washcloth down, and sits on the bed. He lays one hand on the pelt, enjoying the usual twitch from Hannibal at the touch. “So how were you caught? I assume you are old enough to have walked on the shores of my world before and not been found.”

Hannibal makes an amused sound. “I am much older than I look, I assure you. And yes, I have walked on your shores without being found before.” He shifts in place, rather like one would shift to find a new position on a chair, and says, “Your humans were smart. They worked in two teams – one to herd me further down the shore, and one with dogs to sniff out my pelt. I could fight all of the men without any problem, but once they got my pelt – ”

“ – they had you.”

Hannibal shrugs as much as the chains allow for. “They held a torch and threatened to burn it. I surrendered.”

Will glances at the pelt. If he didn’t know it was from a selkie and didn’t have his vampire nose, he might have mistaken it for a normal pelt – beautiful and soft, but nothing out of the ordinary save for the fine craftsmanship. He already knows just how intimately Hannibal is connected to it; he can’t imagine what might happen to Hannibal if it was burned.

“What would have happened? If they burned it.”

“ . . . I do not know,” Hannibal admits. “But I would take that pig’s brand a thousand times over than suffer one hair on my pelt to be singed.”

Will bares his teeth at the reminder of the brand. “Mason Verger *will* suffer for that,” Will promises. “He had no right to do it.”

“And you have the right to do this?” Hannibal fires back. He shakes the chains, enough for them to rattle loudly in the chamber, and continues, “I am not one of your slaves. I do not answer to you.”

Will smiles, because this is territory he can handle. He pulls the pelt into his lap and strokes it, very gently. “Oh, but I do have the right, Hannibal. From the moment you stepped foot on this land – my land – you became mine. And when you entered that village, I gained the right to do whatever I wanted to you. I am Lord of this territory, and every being here answers to me. Now, you do as well.”

“I am of the sea, and she has no master.”

“And does the sea not answer to the call of the moon?” Will challenges. “Does the sea not yield her bounty to our nets and hooks? Does the sea not allow our ships to conquer her waves?”

“You think yourself the moon between the two of us?”

“Well,” Will says slyly, getting to his feet and pacing a slow circle around Hannibal, watching as he tries and fails to follow Will with his eyes, “you do answer my call, don’t you? You rise when I pull, and fall when I retreat. I am the only light of companionship you see. And I am the only constant in your life, am I not?”

Hannibal is silent for a very long moment. He works his jaw a few times, but he seems neither angry nor displeased. If anything, Will would say he’s enjoying the verbal sparring.

Finally, Hannibal says, “You think very highly of yourself, Lord Will.”

“And you think very highly of yourself, Master Lecter,” Will replies. He nudges one of Hannibal’s legs until Hannibal moves, and then cocks his head and contemplates the very fine backside before him. He’s seen many a fine backside, of course, because some villages are *very* eager to offer him whoever they judge the most beautiful virgin, but Hannibal is from another realm entirely – literally. “Have you ever engaged in copulation, Hannibal?”

Hannibal accepts the change in subject with the same stoicism as he did when Will first tied him up. “No.”

“No stomach for it?”

“No interest in siring young,” Hannibal says dryly.

“Well, fortunately for you,” Will replies cheerily, “I am incapable of siring young on you. Unless selkie anatomy is far different inside than I suspect. No? Wonderful. I have an excellent collection I think you’ll really enjoy.”

Hannibal is quite observant, so after the third toy Will pulls out, he clears his throat and says, “These were all made to the same dimensions, were they not?”

Will raises an eyebrow. “You got a good look at my measurements,” he says slyly. “What do you think?”

Hannibal raises an eyebrow, and Will can practically see him rewinding his memories to the time Will bared himself and proceeded to jerk off all over Hannibal's pelt. Will's done it few more times, of course, just to renew the scent, but in the privacy of his rooms, if only for the joy of imaging Hannibal aroused and desperate at the sensation of Will doing naughty things to his pelt. Hannibal usually gave him a judgmental eyebrow afterwards, so Will knew that he knew.

"Do I get a say in whether this happens?"

Will shrugs. "You can say no. I can eat you out again, if that's preferable. Or just jerk you off. Or I can come all over your pelt again if – "

"No, that's not necessary," Hannibal says hastily.

Will studies him closely. Hannibal does not strike him as someone who hides what he takes pleasure in; Hannibal has so far endured his imprisonment and Will's repeated denials with an air of subtle joy, something Will might define as "interesting things actually happening to me for once". Given that Hannibal has made no demands to be returned to his family or threatened vengeance by a family, put together with his comments of harsh winters and fallen kin, Will imagines a very lonely picture of Hannibal's life. After all, why else risk coming to the human world, if not for interesting adventures?

"Are you saying no?" Will asks.

"Not in the least," Hannibal says, a sly look in his eyes. He even spreads his legs and lifts his chin, a challenger to the end. "I would simply prefer the real thing, as it were, to a fake, if immaculately produced, replica."

And, well, Will has to laugh at that. He chucks the toys back into the chest and slams it shut, still laughing, and begins to pull off his clothes.

"You're very bold indeed," Will says in delight. "I don't think I will ever let you leave, Hannibal."

"You still think you can tame me?"

Will puts the barest edge of vampire speed into his pace as he walks to Hannibal, enough that he knows he appears as a blur of wind and skin before he comes to a stop right in front of Hannibal and seizes the selkie's throat. "You've already submitted to my teeth and my chains, Hannibal," Will purrs, putting just enough pressure to lift Hannibal off the ground as much as his chains allow. "And now you will submit to my desire. I've already tamed you, and you know it, and I know it. All that is left is for you to admit it."

He lets Hannibal drop, enjoying the way he gasps for breath, and contemplates the ring of faint bruises he's left behind.

"Maybe I should commission you a collar," Will muses. "Unbreakable, like your chains. I can even put a dog tag on it. *Property of Will*. Would you wear it?"

“It might prevent you from feeding,” Hannibal rasps.

“Your neck is hardly the only place from which I could feed,” Will says. “Although you do make a point. Perhaps a collar for my little friend down there, then. I could make sure you never come again, pet. How about that?”

Perhaps it’s the implied threat of a permanent cage or perhaps Hannibal gets bored, but either way, he takes a deliberate step forward into Will’s space. “How about you finish with your empty threats and hollow taunts,” Hannibal says lowly, eyes staring unblinkingly into Will’s, “and show me what you’re made of? Unless you’re afraid I might find you lacking.”

“Is that how you want to play it? Fine.”

Vampire speed means Will takes very little time to prepare. In seconds, he’s oiled himself and darted around to Hannibal’s backside and spread Hannibal’s cheeks, so Hannibal has barely finished smirking at Will’s question before Will is thrusting up, sheathing himself in one smooth push. He doesn’t check his strength either, so Hannibal is thrown against his restraints, and Will is gratified to hear Hannibal’s breath come out in a tortured gasp as his body and mind catch up to what Will has done.

“Do you still think I am lacking?” Will asks, punctuating each word with a brutal thrust.

When Hannibal goes to answer, Will slides one of his hands around and pinches Hannibal’s nipple. He does check his strength here, if only because he has no desire to wound Hannibal, but he’s very curious about Hannibal’s reaction to pain mixed with pleasure, and Hannibal rewards him by moaning louder than a brothel harlot.

“I asked you a question, Hannibal, Master of the Lecters. Are you going to defy your lord and master?”

“Will – ”

Will pinches the other nipple. “I have another name when I’m inside you, pet.”

Hannibal growls like an enraged cat. He writhes in Will’s arms, almost like he’s trying to escape, but Will merely laughs, for the chains keep Hannibal from moving very far at all, and the movement gives Will the excuse to thrust even harder. It certainly strains Hannibal’s wrists and ankles against the chains, but as bruises bloom in Hannibal’s skin, the air fills with the scent of blood and Hannibal, and Will is incapable of finding that anything but delicious.

Will puts his mouth to Hannibal’s ear. “What is my name, Hannibal?”

“Graham – ”

A nip from Will’s sharp teeth interrupts that sentence. It’s not enough to draw blood, but it makes Hannibal moan. Will hides a smile against Hannibal’s shoulder and lets his hands go off on separate tracks – one goes south, to where Hannibal is hard and leaking, and the other goes north, to encircle Hannibal’s pretty throat. Once there, he squeezes both, and asks again.

“What is my name, Hannibal?”

Hannibal shakes his head. Sweat drips off his hair like the first raindrops of an incoming storm, and Will unashamedly drinks in the scent of desperation and lust. It's such a beautiful cocktail after so many weeks of Hannibal riding the razor's edge of release, and Will almost, *almost*, wants to see what happens if he lets Hannibal tumble off of it.

Almost.

Will strokes Hannibal once, pets at his throat, thrusts one more time, and then comes to a dead stop. He turns Hannibal's head, just enough to make contact with one glazed eye, and smiles through vampire fangs.

"Answer when you're spoken to, pet," Will chides. "What is my name?"

Hannibal's mouth opens, but no sound emerges. His throat moves and his tongue twitches.

Silence.

Will clucks his tongue. "I can stand here all day and not tire. Remember, you're already mine. Acknowledge what you are, Hannibal, for that is the only path forward for you." He tilts his head. "What is my name, pet?"

"*Will*," Hannibal snarls, like the name is dragged from the depths of his stomach.

Will sighs and shakes his head. "So stubborn. I enjoy the fire, truly. But even the most energetic of hounds must know when to heel, and who to obey."

He circles his hips, mostly in thought and partially to hear the whine that emerges when he passes over Hannibal's prostate. It's a good sound, and it soothes Will's raging appetite, but only just. He tries a new tactic.

He leans forward again, tightening his grip on Hannibal, and purrs, "It's your blood allowing me to do this, Hannibal. Your blood that allows me to give into my desire. Your blood that allows me to plunder your depths and discover your secrets. Your blood that gives me the strength to drive you mad from dawn to dusk, and start anew each day. How does that make you feel, pet?"

A tear slips from Hannibal's eye, and Hannibal *breaks*.

"It's *everything*."

Will rewards him with a thrust, quick and hard. "And who is it that provides you with everything?"

"You do!"

Another thrust, slower and longer. "And who am I to you?" Will asks, gentle as he is with the newborn puppies, freshly whelped and longing for a warm breast. "Who am I, Hannibal?"

"*Master*," Hannibal moans. "Master!"

Will gives into his own lust, then. He thrusts hard enough that the chains rattle and the locks squeak and the ceiling itself groans from the force. He squeezes Hannibal's throat until he shakes, and strokes Hannibal until he is whining and squirming like a virgin on the cusp of his first release. He does it all and more, because it pleases him to be master of Hannibal, and good behavior must be rewarded.

He even lets Hannibal come, because it pleases him to feel the way Hannibal tightens around him and the way tears fall from his eyes and the way his voice breaks apart.

Hannibal pleases him, and Will knows now that Hannibal can never leave him.

His own orgasm is rather anticlimactic, when all is said and done. Will leaves Hannibal sweaty and shaking and hanging from the chains, and makes a note to tell his underlings to be very careful when they bathe Hannibal tomorrow, lest they remove the proof of Will's victory. Then he climbs into the bath and begins to fill it with warm water, enjoying the beautiful sight of Hannibal as he tries to put himself back together, even though Will's mark is literally dripping out of him.

"See, that wasn't so hard," Will says absently, relaxing into his bath. "And now you and I know where we stand with each other."

Hannibal struggles back to his feet, still breathing hard, and says, "Are you . . . not going to . . . feed from me?"

Will shrugs. "I fed from you yesterday – did you already forget?"

"I thought you might not turn down the . . . opportunity."

"So thoughtful. Well, fortunately for the both of us, it's not like you're going anywhere, pet," Will says. "I can feed later tonight, or tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow. I can feed whenever I want, however I want, wherever I want. Isn't that right?"

Hannibal hangs his head. "Yes, Will."

"Ah, ah."

"Yes . . . Master."

"Good boy."

Hannibal, fortunately, is no less spirited for having accepted Will's place as his lord and master, and he is as fine a pet as any of Will's horses or hounds. Will wiles away many a pleasant hour with Hannibal, spending his time equally between trading information to learn about selkies and learning to play Hannibal's body as perfectly as one can. Sometimes they even do both at the same time, and Will wrings out answers from his pet thrust by thrust, bite by bite, denied orgasm by denied orgasm.

Hannibal stinks of Will almost as much as his pelt does, and it pleases Will greatly.

One day, after Will has drank his fill and withdrawn and is mindlessly preparing to dress again, Hannibal finally decides to ask.

“You enjoy me like this,” Hannibal notes.

Will smiles widely, licking at his lips to ensure he catches every last drop of blood. “Of course I do. Why else would I keep you?”

“I mean, like *this*,” Hannibal says, and nods to his slowly softening groin. “You enjoy seeing me . . . desperate. Wanting. Denied. Over and over and over again. Yet you do not want me broken. I am curious.”

Will hums and puts a hand on his hip. No pet has ever asked him before, perhaps because they were too scared, but it’s not like Will hasn’t thought about. “I suppose . . . well. It’s hard to explain,” Will replies. “Do you know what wine is, Hannibal?”

“Yes.”

“Very well. Think of each person’s blood as . . . a particular vintage. Some enjoy it bitter, some enjoy it sweet. I, for one, enjoy the sweetness, but not too sweet. I find that those who have orgasmed are quite sweet indeed, enough to make my teeth ache. But the moment just before you tip off the precipice? When you are swimming in adoration and lust and want? That is the perfect hint without being too overbearing.” He pauses. “Not the perfect analogy, I know. But I don’t think anyone but a fellow vampire could understand.”

“Perhaps not. But I do question the logic. To that end, you are filling your cocktail with thousands of droplet of frustration as well as desire; does that not, in the end, permeate the wine and sour the grapes?”

“Never has before.”

“Or you discard us before you reach that point,” Hannibal says.

Will tilts his head to the side. “Are you worried I’ll discard you, Hannibal?” he coos. He pats very gently at Hannibal’s cheek. “You needn’t worry your pretty head about that, pet. I intend to feast on you until death comes to claim you. Maybe it’ll be easier on us both when you are old and tired, and we can spend sweet days in bed instead of long days hanging from chains.”

Will has turned around and put on his shirt by the time Hannibal responds, but his words make Will freeze in their tracks: “Spoken like one who has never been denied anything before.”

Will whirls around. “What did you say?” he snaps.

“Spoken like one who has never been denied anything before . . . Master,” Hannibal repeats, face as calm as it was when Will first dragged him all the way to the Summer Castle. “Have you ever been driven to the edge and then denied, Will?”

“No,” Will admits.

Hannibal's face takes on a calculating edge. "Lost your virginity as a vampire, then?"

"We can't all be promiscuous children," Will says primly. It's not Will's fault he grew up in a tiny fishing village where everyone either left or become grizzled old fishermen, especially after the vampire lady who owned the territory started dropping by for sacrifices. He's just lucky that after she'd drained him dry, she had sighed and allowed him to be properly buried so that he'd turn instead of just letting him rot.

She'd still kicked him promptly out of the territory, though.

"Have you ever been serviced?"

"You service me every day, Hannibal. What are you getting at? I'm growing bored," Will tells him. "And when I get bored, I leave."

Hannibal pulls pointedly on the chains binding his arms high above his head. "Let me service you, Master. Let me give you a taste of what you have given me. You call it an honor and a gift; should you not know what it entails?"

Will's first instinct is to say no. After all, he can taste Hannibal's memories in his blood; he could easily sink his fangs into Hannibal again to learn whatever he wanted. His mind tells him that he already knows what his pets feel, because he's had so many and there's only so much variation in thoughts and feelings.

But Will's hunger – the deep, dark, all-consuming ache that lives in depths of his belly and powers his soul the way his unbeating heart no longer does – Will's hunger wants to say *yes*. That part of him wants to take as much of Hannibal as Hannibal offers, and run as far as he can with it, even if Hannibal is left a sobbing, aching, twitching mess on the ground from him. And usually, Will's hunger wins out, when it comes to curiosity.

After all, it wasn't Will's mind that decided to take Hannibal home and chain him up and play with him every single day.

So Will cocks his head and smiles through his fangs and says, "Convince me, pet. Convince me I should say yes."

Hannibal raises an eyebrow, delightfully proud as always. He bats his eyes and bares his throat, and Will can't help the convulsive swallow at the sight of Hannibal's beautiful pulse and pretty, bruised up throat. Hannibal licks his lips and says, very quietly, "You enjoy denying me release, Will. You enjoy denying me freedom. Don't tell me you won't enjoy denying me breath as well?"

And, well, how can Will refuse *that*?

"I'm convinced," Will says. He looks Hannibal up and down, lips pursed, and continues, "Now you put that big brain of yours to use finding a logistical way to accomplish this honor."

"I can see there is extra length to the chain. You could give me some slack."

“I thought I had already told you to forget the idea of escaping, pet.”

“My legs are still bolted to the floor,” Hannibal points out. “All I need is enough slack to kneel down. You could bolt the chains to the wall, if you still feel that I would win if I challenged you.”

Will shoots him a sharp look. There is extra available length to the chains, of course, because sometimes Will likes to let his pets get a little exercise and walk around the room, and sometimes he just enjoys a nice sex session in a bed instead of standing upright. Will hasn’t used it for Hannibal for obvious reasons, but Hannibal does have a point about fastening the chain to the wall. And furthermore, his only option would be to fetch a chair and stand on it, which wouldn’t be harmful to Will – if he fell, nothing would happen – but it would look quite silly.

Will sighs. “Fine, fine,” he says, and goes to change the way the chains are fastened.

First he flicks Hannibal in the throat, though, because cheek cannot go unanswered, even for a favored pet.

“My apologies, Master,” Hannibal says, not the least bit contrite.

“I am going to ram myself down your throat until you turn blue and not feel the slightest bit of regret,” Will hisses in his ear.

He doesn’t let Hannibal have the breath to respond to that, because he’s had enough cheek out of Hannibal for the week. Instead, as soon as the chains are unclasped, he yanks them down, forcing Hannibal to his knees hard enough that Hannibal winces. As Hannibal catches his breath, Will pulls his arms back and then secures the chains to the wall, tugging a few times just to be sure. And then, for good measure, he goes to his chest of toys and pulls out a generous coil of rope.

Hannibal raises an eyebrow. “I won’t need that to – ”

“Move your legs apart or lose them,” Will says sharply, and fortunately Hannibal is smart enough to do as he’s told. In a few seconds, he ties a strong loop to each of Hannibal’s thighs, which he secures to the bolts holding Hannibal’s ankles to the ground. It’s not unbreakable, but it will certainly slow Hannibal down.

And besides, the red looks very striking against Hannibal’s skin.

“Well, well, pet,” Will says when he’s done. He circles back around to Hannibal’s front, where he takes ahold of Hannibal’s chin and tilts it upwards. “I think I should tie you up with rope more often. You look stunning. And this position – perhaps you shouldn’t have given me the idea, because I quite like this. You almost look like you’re kneeling at the altar of your lord and master. Maybe I should keep you like this all the time.”

“My knees – ”

“That’s what cushions are for,” Will says dismissively. “Remember, Hannibal: whenever I want, however I want, wherever I want. Yes?”

“Yes,” Hannibal breathes.

“Good boy,” Will purrs. “Now, open up. You did ask for this.”

Hannibal does choke, at first, but it’s still enough a delightful sensation for Will to merely sigh and give him time to adjust. He curls his hands into Hannibal’s hair and angles himself again before he starts to really pick up the pace, gratified by the way Hannibal’s eyes begin to glaze over. Will’s been serviced this way before, of course, by the very talented and the absolute novice alike, but there’s something special about Hannibal doing it – about seeing such a proud, powerful, magical creature of the sea on his knees, worshipping Will as though he is the Creator and the World and the Celestial Beings themselves. It’s even better that Hannibal is bound hand and foot, and so although he strains against his chains, Will is the one who dictates depth and pace and everything else about this. He even presses deep instead and goes still, just to admire the way Hannibal’s throat convulses around him.

Will traces Hannibal’s cheek and throat, petting gently, and when he looks at Hannibal’s face again, he struck by the naked joy in Hannibal’s eyes.

“You really do enjoy this, don’t you?” Will asks, amused beyond belief. “Oh, you were made for me, Hannibal. I bet I could never let you come again in your life, and you’d still beg me on your knees to service me. I bet I could never let you leave this tower again, and you’d still beg me to tie you up until you were covered in my knots from head to toe. I bet I could sit on my throne in front of the entire world, and you’d still beg to ride me until your muscles gave out. Aren’t I right?”

He waits a few beats, just to see the words sink into Hannibal’s mind, and then bursts into laughter when he sees the way Hannibal is pulling at the ropes, clearly desperate to try and rub himself against Will’s legs, even if he’s bound too tightly to ever reach.

“Oh, pet,” Will says. “Did that make you aroused?”

Hannibal can’t speak, of course, or nod, but he does pull even harder, and just for that, Will shifts his stance, so it’s impossible for Hannibal to grind himself against Will.

“Excellent,” Will breathes. “I want you hard and desperate and aroused for as long you live, because you are *mine*.”

And then he begins to thrust again, this time not pausing to be considerate of Hannibal’s breathing. It’s wonderful, glorious, pure ecstasy, and Will is in the middle of considering whether he’s drunk enough of Hannibal’s blood to come down his throat and then move onto painting Hannibal’s inside or if he’ll need to pause in between to take a nice drink when the door shudders open.

Will doesn’t stop, because he is the lord and master of this land, but he does snap, “*What??*”

There's no answer, so Will groans and pulls out. Hannibal sags in his bindings, coughing and wheezing, but Will pays him no mind, because he is very annoyed at being interrupted, even if it is his right hand woman.

"What is it, Alana?" Will snarls. "I was not to be disturbed, so why are you disturbing me?"

Alana looks up and down at Hannibal – at his contorted pose, his tear-stained face, his heaving chest – and smirks. "I can see why you didn't want to be disturbed."

"Exactly. So *why are you here*."

"There's been a breach of the outer perimeter, my Lord," Alana answers, transforming instantly into the woman Will has trusted for three centuries as court sorcerer. "They killed the night watch, although I'm not sure how. There are least a dozen intruders – all human."

Will frowns. The Summer Castle hasn't been successfully breached since Will took it and killed his predecessor, and it's not just because Will is strong and has a lot of underlings. The Summer Castle was built for vampires and it really doesn't hold much appeal for humans; it lacks much of the essential comforts, like consistent lighting in the corridors or a recognize pattern in the floor design. The only reason it has indoor plumbing is because Will had it installed when he became lord and master.

"And we're sure they are humans?"

"My wards repel all supernatural beings," Alana says with a shrug. "And they don't have a sorcerer with them. So that means –"

"It means they are something wards can't repel. So. Humans. Do we know who?"

Alana hesitates, but only for a moment. She knows how many lives are at stake in the castle – and she knows that Will does not tolerate disobedience or betrayal, not even from those he favors. "They wear armor engraved with the symbol of the crowned boar," Alana explains quietly.

Will sighs. "I didn't want to crush Verger Village," he complains. "Why does every territory come with one jumped-up little –"

"My Lord," Alana interrupts. "Time is of the essence."

"Yes, of course." Will turns to the bed and begins to dress, because while his skin is hard enough that he basically can't be damaged, he still doesn't fancy fighting people with it all showing and presenting an easier target. "Go, Alana. You have my permission to take any and all action in the defense of Summer Castle."

"And in defense of you?"

Will throws a cocky grin over his shoulder. "I've survived worse than a band of arrogant humans, Alana."

"I'm serious, Will."

“Yes, fine. You have my permission. Now go, please.”

Alana heads to the door, already pulling out her staff, and then she hesitates. “Are you going to release the selkie? Or shall I call a guard to stand at ready outside?”

Will turns around. Hannibal is looking straight at him, face deadly serious. He still looks a right mess, but Will didn’t become lord and master by underestimating beings on how they looked. He can see Hannibal’s eyes, and he knows that Hannibal would happily tear apart any intruders he came across, even naked and winded from Will’s torment.

The problem is, of course, that Hannibal might also turn around and tear apart everyone else after he kills the intruders, and Will is in no mood to catch a selkie, and he’s having too much fun to kill him.

“No,” Will says, just to watch Hannibal droop. He crosses to Hannibal and leans down, so that their eyes meet. “No, you get to stay right here while this problem is handled. Catch your breath, pet; as soon as I have taken care of this problem, I will be coming right back here to thoroughly explore just what the limits of your lungs are. Agreed?”

Hannibal licks his lips. “I don’t have any choice, do I?” he asks, voice as hoarse as though someone had taken sandpaper to him.

“No,” Will agrees, patting his head. “You don’t. Sit tight!”

He allows Alana to place a protective ward on the door, mostly as a precaution. He doubts anyone would be able to kill Hannibal, but then again, Hannibal is severely hobbled if he has to defend himself. And it only takes a few seconds anyways.

“I assume the intruders are heading for the treasury?” Will asks.

Alana nods. “They bypassed the library and the receiving room. The only thing left on that path is the treasury.”

Will scoffs. “Someone didn’t do their research. There’s hardly anything in there.” Well, hardly anything a human might find valuable, anyways. Will’s heard enough lectures from Alana about the valuable nature of sphinx hair and griffin bones to last him several lifetimes.

When they reach the main floor, they split – Alana to her potions room to gather supplies, and Will to the treasury, because he is extremely annoyed. He’s fairly certain that this isn’t the kind of denial Hannibal wished him to experience, but he can’t deny that it gives him extra incentive to crush the problem as expediently as possible. Not that he’s sure he wants to give Hannibal extra incentive, of course, given that Hannibal is already far bolder and cheekier than any pet of Will’s ever has been.

Will’s only concession is to pick up a sword on the way, because sometimes it’s nice to literally slice enemies apart, but it turns out to be not necessary at all, since he only runs into one intruder by the treasury, and it’s not someone who poses any threat to Will at all.

“Mason Verger,” Will says flatly when he rounds the corner. “You were not invited. How rude of you.”

“No ruder than you,” Mason sneers. “Hiding away in your castle, hoarding all the wealth of this land to yourself, starving the people of their deserved riches!”

Mason is wearing a thin bit of chainmail, a sword strapped to either hip, and a very large silver cross dangling from a chain around his neck. It would be imposing – if the chainmail wasn’t old and rusted, and the swords weren’t belted on backwards, and the silver cross weren’t gaudier than a full roasted pig adorned with apples and flowers at a harvest feast.

Will rolls his eyes. “I share as much as you need, and more besides,” he responds. “And there isn’t much treasure that’s of use to you in there. You can see for yourself there isn’t any gold or jewels here, if that’s what you came for.”

“No, no! There must be gold here, there must! My grandfather and great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather, they all dug for it, they told me!”

“And did they mention the part where they never found it?” Will sighs and crosses his arms. “The mines below this castle are empty, Mason. There’s no gold, no diamonds, no rare and precious minerals. They are empty. Just dirt and rock and water. My predecessor knew it, and I know it, and you know it. He just made you dig because it gave him pleasure to see you die.”

“You lie!”

“I never lie,” Will says. “Now, put down that ridiculous cross. And those swords. You can’t hope to defeat me. But if you surrender now, you may have hope of existing for longer than, oh, the next ten minutes.”

A wild air enters Mason’s eyes, like a boar wounded by hounds and backed into a corner. He’s clearly in denial, because whoever has sold him the pretty lie about gold has done an excellent job, but Will has no patience for negotiations and handholding and gentle lecturing. After all, Mason dared to brand Hannibal.

“Look, Mason, I am already quite annoyed that you dared to order a brand be placed on my selkie. So put down the cross and – ”

“I’ll show you a brand!” Mason screeches, rushing forward.

Will lets Mason come to him, mostly because the less effort he has to spend on this miserable sad sack of a human the better. As soon as Mason is in range, sword held clumsily in one hand and cross gripped sideways in the other, Will sidesteps the wild swing of Mason’s sword and reaches out to knock the cross away and –

And *pain* explodes all down Will’s hand and arm, sharp and shocking and deep, like a thousand tiny knives slicing past his skin and into his bone.

Will cries out and staggers back in shock. When he looks to his hand, he finds his usually pristine skin blackened and oozing pus, like he's been burnt, and the burn does not heal the way Will's wounds usually do. Vampires can be hurt, of course, but pain is usually a distant thing for Will, because his wounds heal quickly and few beings are strong enough to actually damage him.

Few beings, and even fewer items.

Will clothes his arm close and eyes the cross in Mason's hand. He'd thought it was a glorified prop, but now that he is focusing on it, he can see the strange shine to the silver.

Mason grins from ear to ear. "Didn't expect that, did you?" he crows. "The perfect weapon to take down a monster like you!"

"So," Will says through gritted teeth, "you found someone in possession of the ancient texts."

"A priest," Mason corrects haughtily. "The highest of callings, once, before you vampires wiped them all out and burned the sacred texts! They kept you monsters cowering in the shadows and rotting in the gutter like you deserved, and you murdered them all and erased them from existence when they had committed no crime!"

Will raises an eyebrow. It is certainly true that vampires did attack priests and did burn holy texts and did not strive to keep their memory alive, and Will won't deny it. But Will isn't an idiot hopped up on adrenaline and self-righteous either; he knows the other side of the story, the ugly side of the men and women who called themselves priests. After all, it was not the vampires who struck first.

"How interesting a story," Will drawls. "I wonder if you know anything about these priests you place on a pedestal. Did you know, for example, that they used to falsely accuse women of witchcraft and burn them at the stake? Did you know that they used to steal children right out of their mothers' arms and abandon those they judged unfit or ugly to die in the wilderness? Did you know they made three treaties with my kind, and broke them all in the name of glory? Do you know anything at all about the priest you've allied with, Mason Verger?"

Mason falters, feet shuddering as he tries to keep himself at a distance from Will's slow advance. It's unlikely that Will's story truly offended Mason, but he knows Mason's kind very well – and men like Mason are always afraid of someone else taking their power.

Someone else like a priest.

"Put down the cross and the sword," Will says softly. "If I kill you for this, it will be a swift death. But your priest? Oh, he will give you a slow one, by fire or by the rack or by stoning. Is that what you want your future to be?"

Will almost has him – Will can see the cowardly indecision in Mason's eyes – when pain explodes in Will's stomach, as though he has been gutted like a fish for supper. Will falls to his feet, gasping at the raw agony, the likes of which he has not felt for centuries, and is so

distracted he almost does not notice the priest approaching and firing another bolt straight at his neck.

Almost.

Will jerks himself to the side, just enough for the bolt to merely score a line across his neck instead of going through his throat. It saves his life, but it still burns, for pure holy water is formidable against a vampire. And it leaves him crumpled on the ground, holy burns spreading across his stomach and up his arm and around his neck, unable to get up or run away as the priest steps closer and aims his crossbow again.

Of course, Will can still speak. “You work fast, priest,” Will pants out. “Takes a lot – to purify the water – and do the blessings.”

The priest sneers at him. “The Creator was on our side, as always,” he says loftily. “Under the light of the sun, I bade the water be purified, and under the light of the full moon, I infused it with the Creator’s blessing. The Creator called upon me to rid the world of you monsters, and I intend to fulfill that calling.”

“Funny. You’d think if he was on your side, he might have stopped us from killing you all,” Will says.

“I survived!”

“No, you didn’t.” Will shifts into a better position against the wall and waves an errant hand. “The last war was over two hundred years ago. Every remaining priest fell at the Battle of the Cliff. If your ancestor didn’t answer the call to fight us at the battle, then you were a coward or an idiot, but not a priest. You’re just a jumped up little hothead who found some old moldy books and thought to make a name for yourself.”

“I fight in the Creator’s name! The Creator came to me and told me what to do!”

“Fine, so you were possessed. Or you’re crazy. Or maybe you just got really, really drunk. Either way: still not a priest.”

“Then how do you explain this?” the priest rages, gesturing to his shimmering crossbow bolts.

Will shrugs. “Being literate and able to read books? I know I helped promote it in my territory. Makes it easier to send messages.”

The priest turns such a deep shade of red that Will almost has to laugh, and only does not because of the throbbing pain swallowing him up. He almost looks ready to explode out of rage itself, but then an ugly, gleeful look enters his eyes and instead he puts the crossbow down and gestures for Mason to come closer. He grabs the sword from Mason, ignoring Mason’s squeak of outrage, and then walks straight up to Will and aims the sword high above his head like a king passing a sentence onto a prisoner bound for the gallows.

“I am Rinaldo Pazzi, Priest of the Creator’s Church,” he announces loftily, as though he has an audience. “And I hereby sentence you, monster, to eternal suffering in hell!”

Will looks up at the sword, gleaming and beautiful, and thinks *So this is how I’m going to die*. After all, none of Will’s guards are here, and even if they were, they’d be of no use against weapons blessed by holy water. Even Alana’s powers would be useless, given that she is the daughter of a demon. It’s not quite how Will figured he’d die, but it’s almost fitting, in a way – Will is going to die alone and bleeding and in agony, the same way he did the first time, before he got his second chance of life.

No third chances, I suppose, Will thinks, and lifts his head to meet his death straight on.

The sword plunges downward, inexorable and unyielding, and is just about to slide into Will’s dead heart when a blur comes out of nowhere and slams into the priest, sending him flying so hard that the priest actually travels a fair distance down the corridor, smacks into a wall, and causes the light to fall off.

After a few confused blinks, the blur resolves into the naked, sweaty, angry figure crouching in front of Will, and well. Will’s all too familiar with that particular backside.

“Hannibal?” Will says.

Hannibal looks over his shoulder. His eyes are wild and alight with fury, his teeth are sharp and bared, and his chest is rumbling with the faintest of growls. “Stay right there,” Hannibal says. “Catch your breath, Master; let me take care of this problem.”

“Why you cheeky little – ”

Hannibal ignores him, as he so often does, and darts towards Mason. Mason screams and flails and tries to run, but Hannibal crashes into his back like a lion seizes a deer. They go down, Mason screaming and Hannibal snarling, and Mason’s screams cut off abruptly when Hannibal slams his head on the concrete, twice in quick succession, and then kicks him as he stands up for good measure.

By then, the priest is pushing himself to his feet, but Hannibal charges at him too, seemingly unconcerned. Will yells a warning when the priest whips his sword up, but Hannibal bats it away like it’s nothing, lands a solid kick on the priest’s shins, and then wraps his strong hands around the priest’s throat.

After he shakes the priest a few times, like a misbehaving toddler, Hannibal drags him kicking and screaming back to Will as if he is a hound returning with a shot turkey.

“So, what shall I do with him?” Hannibal asks politely, not even out of breath and efficiently dodging the priest’s frantic arm waves.

Will gapes at him. “How did you – the holy water – how are you not harmed?”

Hannibal raises an eyebrow. “You aren’t concerned about how I got out of my restraints? You are a strange one.”

“Hannibal,” Will growls.

“It is holy water, Will,” Hannibal points out. “I am a selkie. We are of the sea, of the ocean, of *water*. His holy water cannot hurt me anymore than a bath of blood can hurt you, no matter what little rituals and mutterings he does over it.”

Will stares at Hannibal, at his beautiful, lovely, naked and bloody and sweat selkie, and feels his mind come to a screeching halt. It makes sense, what Hannibal is saying, but mostly Will doesn’t feel an admiration for Hannibal’s skills and strength as much as he really, really wants to throw Hannibal in bed and have his wicked way with him.

“Master,” Hannibal repeats, in a tone of voice that implies he’s said it several times, “what shall I do with him?”

Will blinks and looks at the priest, who looks like he’s about to pass out from the fear and the confusion. Will could certainly do many things to him, of course, as is his right as lord and master, and he saw many creative punishments applied to the priests after the Battle of the Cliff, but – well. He does have a pet with a very pretty brain and a cheeky mouth.

Will laughs and waves a hand. “I’m sure you have some good ideas, pet. Why don’t you surprise me?”

Unholy joy fills Hannibal’s eyes. He drags the priest kicking and screaming to the nearest window and shatters the glass with one swift kick, leaving a giant gaping hole that stretches from the floor to the ceiling. Ignoring the priest’s screams and flails, Hannibal switches to using a one arm chokehold, holding the priest against his chest as close as a lover. Then he produces a knife from . . . somewhere, sharp and shiny, and aims it precisely over the priest’s heart before he suddenly pauses.

Hannibal cocks his head, ever so slightly, and therefore Will is not at all surprised when he hears the distinct sound of Alana walking up to them. Her formerly pristine white suit is drenched red with blood, and although she is barefoot, she does not pause as she walks over Mason’s still body or the weapons scattered around, for she is alight with the golden glow of her power and treads several inches off the ground. She is in full battle regalia, as Will likes to call it: eyes aglow, magic curling around her fingers and legs, bloody and glorious and a force to be reckoned with.

“I kept my promise,” Hannibal says to her.

Alana rolls her eyes. “And my knife,” she notes, which explains where Hannibal got it, although not where the hell he was hiding it. “So this is him?”

“He announced himself as Rinaldi Pazzi,” Will volunteers from the floor.

Alana harrumphs. She steps closer to the priest, and Will laughs out loud to see the pure *fear* in his eyes as he realizes just exactly what Alana is.

“Hello, Rinaldo Pazzi,” Alana says. “I know your name. Your ancestor, Francesco – he was hung for betraying your kind. Thirty pieces of silver from the Vampire Banker, as I recall. I

wasn't there, of course, but I've heard the stories, and I've ever seen the art. Your own priestly brothers commemorated the occasion after they hung him, even though it didn't help them win the Battle of the Cliff. Although there is some debate over whether the hanging was done with the bowels in or the bowels out; I've seen both illustrations. What do you think?"

The priest garbles something – it's utterly incomprehensible even to Will's enhanced hearing, either because of Hannibal's chokehold or Alana's sheer intimidating presence. If he had to guess, he would suspect the priest was squeaking *no no no*.

Hannibal shrugs, like he has no care in the word, and says loud enough for Will and Alana to hear: "Bowels out, I think."

In one swift movement, Hannibal stabs the priest straight in the chest and yanks downwards, drawing an agonized shriek from the priest. Alana brings her hands together and then makes a circle, golden light coalescing in her palms like a ball of yarn, and when Hannibal kicks the priest out the window, Alana's light follows, coiling around the priest's neck as the world's most perfectly fitting magical noose.

The rope goes tight, the priest gurgles, and after a long moment, Will hears the telltale squishy *splat* of something soft landing on the ground far, far below.

Will clears his throat. "So, did we win?"

"The intruders are all dead, if that's what you're asking," Alana answers. "I've dispatched some guards to Verger Village; they'll make sure no one leaves and begin transporting prisoners here for the trial. I assume you do want a trial?"

"Oh yes," Will says. He nods to Mason. "Hannibal didn't kill that one. See to it that he's stripped of his weapons and tied up, will you?"

"Food and water, or starvation?"

"He's not getting an easy death. Give him the bare minimum to live until I'm ready to deal with him."

"Yes, my Lord." The glow fades from Alana, like the sun sinking below the horizon, and she lands gracefully on the floor, looking tired and a bit exasperated. "What were you thinking, rushing a man armed with holy water weapons alone?"

"Well, forgive me for assuming that all of those were destroyed."

"You should be more careful," Alana lectures. "If that priest had aimed about a centimeter to the right –"

"I'd be dead, I know it, you know it, we all know it, huzzah," Will says impatiently. "I just need some blood and I'll be fine."

"You need a lot of blood," Hannibal says, coming to crouch by Will. The fire in his eyes has died down; he looks a lot less like an enraged lion and a lot more like a worried lioness, nosing at her cubs. "Can this damage even be repaired by blood, Will?"

“Humans need time, Alana needs sex, and I need blood. That’s all we need to heal.”

“Then allow me to provide,” Hannibal says smoothly, before he scoops Will up like a bride on her wedding day.

Will squawks in outrage. “Put me down!”

“No,” Hannibal replies shortly, striding away with a purpose. “I promised Alana that I would do anything to save your life, and I always keep my promises.”

“She cursed you, didn’t she?”

“She did take some of my hair when she released me, if that’s what you mean. What she did with it, I have no idea.”

Will groans and pushes his face against Hannibal’s shoulder. He can hear Alana laughing in the distance and it certainly doesn’t make him happy, but he does know that she’s capable enough to handle the fallout. And he does need blood, because when a vampire gains burns from holy water, the damage sinks deep into their bones and keeps traveling, like an infection. He’s definitely heard of vampires dropping dead weeks or months later, when the damage reaches their mind and corrupts their lungs, although it became a much rarer occurrence after the priests were wiped out.

As Hannibal reaches the tower and begins to climb, still not showing any signs of trouble bearing Will’s weight, Will says, “Even after I am healed, Hannibal, that will not release you from me. You should know that. If I must, I will put you back in those chains.”

“Dearest Will,” Hannibal replies, nudging the door open, “I just allowed a succubus to curse me for you. I just ran across the entire castle barefoot and without a weapon for you. I just killed a man for you.” He lowers Will to a sitting position on the bed and kneels at Will’s feet, face uplifted, knees spread, eyes filled with adoration. “What makes you think I could ever leave you?”

Will is not conscious of moving, but suddenly he blinks and he is kissing Hannibal. His hands are tight around Hannibal’s face, his legs are squeezing tight around Hannibal’s middle, his tears are mixing with Hannibal’s, and after that, they just can’t stop touching. They trade kisses, over and over, until Hannibal breaks away and begins to lay kisses over the wounds Will sustained in the fight with Mason. He is tender enough not to cause Will pain, but fiercely purposeful, as though he is laying his own brand on top of the wounds and washing away the stench of human, declaring ownership by scent.

Then his mouth goes lower. Hannibal is wearing no clothes, of course, but Will still is, and Hannibal rends apart the garments like they burn him.

“Please let me – Will – please,” Hannibal begs, scrabbling at Will’s pants like a dog at the door. “Please!”

“Please what?”

“Please, Master,” Hannibal says, and Will grabs his hair and guides him back to where they left off. It’s a dozen times, a hundred times, a thousand times better now, with Hannibal’s desperation and his adoration and the sheer adrenaline coursing through his body to raise his body temperature. Will ruts into Hannibal’s mouth, pushing past his moans and gasps, and his nose twitches when he scents the telltale tang of Hannibal’s arousal.

“Oh, pet,” Will groans. “You *spoil* me.”

If Hannibal was wrecked before, he’s even more so this time, and Will is seized by a fierce and abiding tenderness, because Hannibal is *his*, in mind and body and soul, and Hannibal has admitted it and accepted it and loves him even more for it.

Just before Hannibal reaches his climax, Will yanks him off, hauls him onto the bed, and sinks his fangs into Hannibal’s shoulders.

Hannibal screams, but he does not push Will away and he does not stop rutting frantically against Will’s thigh, and moments later Will’s mouth is flooded with the too-sweet taste of release. Yet he keeps drinking, chasing the flavor, because it’s surprisingly not overpowering the way it is in most humans, and Will is pleased to find that Hannibal is, yet again, an extraordinary pet.

Will drinks unless the pain dulls to a bare whisper, and then he pulls back, although Hannibal immediately tries to bring him back.

“No, pet,” Will says, pushing Hannibal’s hand away. “A little at a time. If I rush the healing too much, it tends to mess things up. Especially if its wounds dealt by holy water.”

“But you still need – ”

“In due time, yes, I will need more blood, and I will take it. Whenever I want, however I want, wherever I want,” Will reminds him, and he smirks at the blush that appears in Hannibal’s cheeks. A quick shift of his leg confirms that Hannibal has indeed softened, but not by much, and in fact he is starting to harden again. “Oh dear. Does that phrase mean something special to you now?”

Hannibal hangs his head, breaking eye contact, and says nothing.

Will laughs, long and loud. “Oh, I am going to have so much fun! Now then, roll over, pet,” he commands, and when Hannibal hesitates, perhaps to gather his thoughts, Will smacks him sharply. “I said, roll over.”

Hannibal does indeed roll over, and he spreads his legs willingly when Will pushes them aside and settles in between them, master of his domain.

“If you are not going to feed,” Hannibal asks, “what are you going to do?”

Will smirks and presses Hannibal’s arms to the bed, and then he lowers his weight until they are chest to chest, pinning Hannibal and preventing him from moving. “Why, I’m going to do exactly as I said. You’re not the only one who keeps his promises, Hannibal. I am going to

thoroughly explore just what the limits of your lungs are. That includes taking you in any and every position I want, marking you wherever I want, and feeding from you whenever I want. Do you still have questions?"

"N – No, Master," Hannibal stammers, eyes dilated wide and black.

"Excellent," Will purrs, and guides himself back into Hannibal where he belongs, enjoying the way Hannibal moans and shakes as Will slides home in one smooth thrust. "Now, let's begin."

Will does eventually stop, mostly out of concern of Hannibal's heart giving out from the strain, but partially because he also wants to slip into sleep and give his wounds the last push they need to truly heal. Hannibal is exhausted, barely able to twitch as Will maneuvers him, and he is covered in Will's bites, Will's marks, and Will's seed. He stopped coming hours ago, although that only opened up the wonderful door of new, raw, oversensitive sounds as Will played with Hannibal's prostate. Still, Will can't deny that he's certainly earned his rest.

Will rises and saunters over to the bath. He wets a towel and begins to clean himself, just to remove any last traces of human scent and holy water. He does the same for Hannibal, and then he pulls out the topmost few layer of sheets and blankets and pushes them to the ground, so that they may lie on clean sheets.

Finally, he retrieves Hannibal's pelt and returns to the bed, curling up next to Hannibal so that it covers them both.

"Go to sleep, Hannibal," Will says softly. "When we wake, I plan to break out my toys."

Hannibal snuffles in his sleep and does not protest.

After about a week, Will tells Hannibal that they will be leaving the tower, although he does so when Hannibal happens to bent over the bed and moaning in perfect symphony to Will's thrusts. It means, for one thing, that Hannibal does not immediately question him, and for another, it means that Will gets a lovely orgasm out of the deal before they have to begin dressing.

Hannibal blinks dumbly at him when Will's words finally register, and he turns his face on the bed to look at Will, although he does not stand up or otherwise move, because he knows better than to do so without Will's permission.

"We are leaving the tower?" Hannibal repeats. "May I ask why?"

Will gets into the bath and starts running the water, relaxing against the back with a sigh. "Because, my dear Hannibal, one of my villages tried to start a revolt, and as the vampire lord and master, I need to make it very clear that this sort of behavior is not tolerated," he explains patiently. "I cannot very well hold the trial from here, but if I wait much longer, Mason might drop dead before I get to deal with him."

“And you want me . . . present for this?”

“Oh yes,” Will says. “He still needs to answer for the brand on your back, pet.”

Will scrubs himself efficiently, making sure that he is clean and presentable, before he rises from the tub and begins to dry himself. Hannibal watches him in silence, eyes half-closed, since Will has given him no orders and the bed is actually comfortable enough to fall asleep against, if one is sufficiently tired. And Will has certainly tired Hannibal out.

Will opens the door and retrieves the bundle he ordered Alana to leave for him. Mostly it is clothes, fine and proper and richly decorated as befits a vampire lord of Will’s standing, but there is a small bag that contains two rings that hum of magic. Will lifts one and examines it under the light, admiring the unique weaving of hair and blood thread, before he sets it aside, satisfied.

Humming quietly, Will then goes to the chest and begins to rummage through it. They’ve used most of the toys there as Will learned what made Hannibal scream and what made him shrug, but there is one particular toy they’ve not used, because Will had no need for it whilst Hannibal was in the tower with him and Will could refresh his mark inside Hannibal whenever he wanted. Outside of the tower, though, is a different story.

Hannibal is well and truly dozing by the time Will finds what he is looking, and so Will is able to part Hannibal’s legs and push most of the plug into him before Hannibal realizes what is happening and tenses up. Fortunately, by then, Will has pushed it completely inside, although he taps the end a few times just to hear Hannibal inhale.

“That’s new,” Hannibal says, shifting his hips experimentally.

“It’s one of my finest,” Will tells him. “It is even set with a lovely ruby at the end. I commissioned it just for you. What do you say, pet?”

“Thank you, Master,” Hannibal recites obediently.

“Good boy. You can stand, by the way,” Will adds. “You’re almost presentable for court, and I won’t have us be late because of you.”

Hannibal pushes himself to his feet, an uneasy look on his face as the plug shifts inside of him. Will doesn’t hide his smirk, because it’s rare indeed to see Hannibal unsettled, and Will didn’t order a small plug by any means.

Hannibal clears his throat. “Is this . . . all I will be wearing?”

Will looks him up and down. They bathed last night, so Hannibal is no longer covered in sweat or come, but he does bear some marks from Will’s fangs. “No one will dare to lay a hand on you, if that’s what you’re concerned about.”

“You wish to show me off.”

“I wish for you to know your place,” Will says sweetly. Then he snaps his fingers, as if he’s forgotten something, and turns around to grab one of the rings. “Oh, but I did forget this!

Silly me. Go ahead and put it on. Alana made it especially for you.”

Hannibal takes the ring from Will as one takes a live, spitting, angry serpent, pinching it between two fingers and holding it far away from himself. He looks at Will, who is still smiling, and looks at the ring, and swallows hard. Then, gingerly, he slides the ring onto his left hand, eyes narrowed as if bracing himself for a nasty surprise.

Then the ring is on, and Hannibal blows out a quiet sigh when nothing happens. “I would have thought,” he begins to say.

Will, who used the moment to slide on his own ring, snaps his fingers, and the ring lights up with magic. Gold and red threads unravel themselves from the ring, hovering in the air for a moment to illuminate Hannibal’s shocked face, before they dive down and sink beneath Hannibal’s skin. The pain hits a moment later as the threads force themselves through Hannibal’s body, weaving up his arm and encircling his throat before heading down to conquer his lower body, and Hannibal lets out a choked out scream and falls to his knees. He knows better, of course, Will has trained him better, but pain overcomes many things, and Will watches in silence as Hannibal tries desperately to pull off the ring, first with his fingers and then with his teeth. But he is unsuccessful, and moments later the gold and red threads arrive at Hannibal’s feet, curl around his ankles, and go still and quiet.

Will listens to Hannibal’s pained pants and smiles. He never doubted Alana, of course, but this is a very tricky magical binding, and the risk of failure and death was not exactly minimal. Yet the reward is certainly worth it.

“It’s a binding spell,” Will says, studying his own ring where it sits on his left hand. “Your ring is connected to my ring, and, now that your ring is a part of you, you are part of me.”

Hannibal takes a deep breath. “I swore to you that I would not leave. I was not lying.”

“Perhaps. Perhaps not. We all make stupid decisions in the heat of the moment,” Will replies. He crosses over to Hannibal and lifts his chin. “I did not become the lord and master by trusting blindly, Hannibal. I meant when I said that you were mine, and now I have ensured it. If you try to betray me, your voice won’t be able to produce a single sound. If you try to kill me, you will feel the pain of a thousand deaths. And if you ever try to leave me, your limbs won’t carry you past the front gate. You should thank me, for removing the temptation.”

“ . . . Thank you.”

“Ah ah.”

“Thank you, Master.”

Will pets Hannibal’s hair. “Good boy,” he says. “Besides, there are other fun benefits of this spell. For example.”

He snaps his fingers again, concentrating, and the golden and red threads awaken underneath Hannibal’s skin. They do not cause pain this time, but they do gather themselves together,

weaving into a beautiful and ornate collar around Hannibal's neck. Will stretches out his hand and the threads stretch back to meet him, forming a lovely long leash, before Will dismisses them and they fade away.

"Perfectly sized restraints," Will says in delight. "Now we can play without needing to stop and get ropes or chains. Isn't it wonderful?"

Hannibal glances down at his body, probably noting how the golden and red threads are woven throughout his entire body, and Will can see the exact moment that it dawns upon Hannibal just how many ways Will can bind him with a snap of his fingers and a thought.

Hannibal swallows, throat bobbing against the collar, and leans against Will's legs. "Very wonderful indeed, Master."

There's reluctance in Hannibal's voice, but he closes his eyes and pushes into Will's hand when Will strokes his hair, and he does not attempt to remove the ring again. It paints a fairly clear picture for Will, to say the least. "Alana is my court sorcerer, pet," Will says gently. "Whatever your feelings on magic, you must understand that I will use it."

"Do you trust her?"

"She has fought by my side for a very long time – long before I had even amassed a following, really. She has never strayed or betrayed me, and she has never asked for anything unreasonable. I provide her with a home, with food, and with permission to do research and play with her toys, and she provides me with magical artifacts, defensive and offensive wards, and little commissions like this."

Hannibal heaves a put-upon sigh. "In other words, I should play nice."

Will shrugs. "I am not asking you to love her with all of your heart, Hannibal. Merely that you understand that she is important, and I will not tolerate disrespect."

"Yes, Master," Hannibal says. "Are we ready to leave?"

"Yes, we are." Will tugs on the leash, delighted to see that Hannibal rises immediately to follow. "Now come. I think it's time my court got a good look at my favorite pet."

There aren't many vampires roaming the halls, for Will does not keep an overlarge court and most of his vampires are in throne room waiting for the trial to begin or performing their regular duties, but the few they do pass stop and bow respectfully to Will. Most are smart enough not to react to the sight of Will striding through the halls dressed in full court regalia with a naked man on a leash behind him, and Will sees a handful of his vampires sneak second glances at Hannibal, envy burning in their eyes, and it makes joy rise in his heart.

Hannibal clears his throat. "You enjoy this."

"When you have a beautiful jewel, the enjoyment is as much from owning it," Will says, "as it is from showing it off to the world."

Hannibal snorts. “So I should be kept in a beautiful case, swaddled with furs and protected by a throng of guards?”

“Don’t be ridiculous. A beautiful jewel should be viewed unadorned, so that there are no distractions by lesser beings. And no ugly craftsman to mar its beauty either.”

When they finally reach the throne room, Will comes to a stop and turns to face Hannibal. Seeing as Hannibal has spent the entirety of his tenure bound in Will’s castle, he has had no exposure to Will’s court and more importantly, no exposure to Will’s rules. Will is not a harsh ruler, but he has learned long ago the price of not keeping control with a firm hand and a stern voice.

To Hannibal, he says, “Kneel, pet. There are some things we must discuss.”

Hannibal sinks to his knees obediently, hands tucked dutifully behind his back. He paints a lovely picture of submission, and Will makes a note to engage a skilled painter to capture the image one day. Perhaps a series of portraits, if Will feels in a sharing mood.

“I’ve allowed you a certain degree of freedom that I otherwise would not tolerate,” Will tells Hannibal. “Because you have been out of the eye of the court, and because you were still learning your place. That time is over; you are mine, and now the whole world will know it. In public, I expect you to conduct yourself with the utmost obedience and politeness. There will be no cheekiness, no backtalk, and no defiance, because I will not hesitate to have you publicly flogged – or worse – for it. I must hold you to the same standard as any other member of my court, and I will *not* have my reputation marred because you decided to use that pretty head of yours and offer unasked commentary. Am I understood?”

Hannibal inclines his head gracefully. “Answer when spoken to,” he says, “and otherwise, remain a mute decoration.”

Will reaches down and hooks a finger into Hannibal’s collar, putting just enough pressure that Hannibal has to fight his instinct to rise out of his kneeling stance in order to breathe. “What did I say about any kind of cheek, Hannibal?”

“Understood, Master,” Hannibal chokes out.

Will continues to pull until he sees tears well up in Hannibal’s face, and then he releases him. “Just for that, you’ll be entering on your hands and knees,” Will commands. “You are my pet, and I am your lord and master, and what I say is law. Do not disobey me again. Do not even *think* of disobeying me again. Now. Let us enter.”

Will normally disdains the pomp and ceremony of court, but that doesn’t mean he fails to understand the necessity or reason. On a usual day, he will hold court in one of the smaller halls, and sit at a regular table with Alana and his advisors to handle the daily issues. Today, however, is not a normal day, and so Will enters the massive throne room to the tune of trumpets and the bellowing voice of his herald announcing him. His guards salute him as one and fall into line behind him to escort him up the long red carpet to the throne, which is a massive gaudy thing lined with gold and jewels set atop a dais. Alana stands at his right, clad in her own pristine court regalia, and when he approaches, she takes his crown and sends it

floating through the air with her magic, so that by the time Will climbs onto the dais and perches himself on his throne, he has nice golden crown on his head, a long purple cloak, and all the other trappings of a true lord and master.

The only new element is Hannibal, but Will tugs him closer with his leash, and Hannibal crawls onto the dais on all fours, settling neatly on his knees by Will's feet like a dog. It pleases Will, which is good, because Will needs some joy to remind himself that he should not burn Verger Village and all its inhabitants to the ground.

Currently, all of the inhabitants are cowering in the farthest corner of the room, under the watchful eye of Will's guards. All of the intruders are dead – Alana and Will's guards killed them, and Hannibal of course killed the priest – but they had family and co-conspirators in the village, and these people are separated into a smaller group on the other side of the throne room, bound hand and foot. They are also connected by chains and collars upon their neck, to make it easier for Will to condemn one and wipe out the family line, as is tradition.

But they are a lesser concern. First, Will must deal with Mason.

Will leans forward. "Seven days ago, your leader – the man you chose to make the decisions in your village – decided to lead a revolt against me. He did so with the help of several of your villagers. The agreement between your village and me is that I provide sanctuary and provisions, and you in turn provide me with goods and sacrifices, and neither of us will attack the other. You have now broken that promise, and I am well within my rights to slaughter you all."

Will pauses, then, and makes eye contact with the villagers on both side. Many are cringing or trembling, but a few stare back, angry and unapologetic, and Will makes careful note of each.

"Out of the kindness of my heart, I have chosen not take that right," Will announces, and he watches as some of the villagers weep and clutch their family members close. "So instead we will hold a trial, and sort out the guilty from the innocent. You are here to witness and to remember. Let the first of the accused be brought forth!"

Alana nods the nearest guard, and the doors bang open. It's still a raucous entrance, but this time it is because Mason is screaming insults at the top of his lungs as he is dragged into the throne room.

He is a far cry from the richly dressed, sleek and well-fed man who once greeted Will and handed Hannibal over. Now his clothes are rent to shreds, his feet are covered in dirt, and his face is smeared with blood. He is also clad in chains, and seeing as Will sees no point in keeping separate chains for humans and those who are not, the second Will's guard release Mason, he topples over on his side, unable to rise with the heavy weight of chains meant to contain vampires.

"Mason Verger," Will says over Mason's stuttering shrieks, "you stand accused of treason. You stand accused of conspiracy. You stand accused of harming your lord and master. How do you answer?"

“You are a monster!” Mason yells. “You are not worthy of the throne, you are less the dirt beneath my shoes, you pretender!”

Will hums. “I should think we can take that as a confession. What say you, Lady Alana?”

“Aye,” Alana says.

“What say you, people of Verger Village?”

“Aye,” comes the chorus, although meek and quiet.

Will looks back at Mason, who is panting into the carpet, finally out of breath. He smiles and leans forward. “Mason Verger, you have been found guilty of crimes too numerous to count. For that, your sentence falls to me. Firstly and perhaps most importantly, you are hereby stripped of your status as leader of Verger Village, for you have shown no appreciation of the trust they imparted in you. Secondly, you are stripped of your status as a free human in my territory, for you have shown you have no appreciation of the gift of freedom I have granted you.”

“So what are you going to do? Kill me? Get it over with, monster!” Mason snarls.

“Kill you?” Will laughs, loud and long, and relaxes back into his throne. “I am not going to kill you, Mason. You are going to live, and you are going to suffer for your crimes, and you are going to work long and hard to repay what you have cost me.”

Will nods to his guards, and they grab Mason’s arms and force him up, so that he kneels before Will. There is a sheen of slight fear in his eyes, but Will ignores it; Mason’s fate was sealed long ago, and he no longer cares whether Mason fears him. Mason just needs to suffer.

“Lady Alana,” Will says, “are you prepared?”

“Yes, my Lord,” Alana says promptly. She steps off the dais and strides towards Mason, calling upon her magic, and her outline begins to glow golden with her power. She takes up a long knife and slices down Mason’s back, cutting through the shreds of his shirt, and leaves him bare and shaking.

Will lets go of Hannibal’s leash, dismissing it with a snap of his fingers, and strokes Hannibal’s cheek. “Now, my pet, it is time Mason answered for that brand,” Will says tenderly. “Go to Alana, and kneel next to her so that she may touch your back.”

Hannibal gives him a look, but he remembers his place and does not question Will. He merely turns and moves towards Alana, remaining on his hands and knees as Will ordered, and Will feels the faint stirrings of lust as he sees the ruby winking at him with each step Hannibal takes away from him. It’s almost enough to make him forget why he is here.

Almost.

Alana places herself between Mason and Hannibal, all focus upon the spell at hand, and lays on one hand on each of their backs. The words she speaks are soft but ringing with power, and it takes only a moment before the ugly brand upon Hannibal’s back to begin to glow an

angry orange-red, as it must have looked when Hannibal was branded. There is no pain for Hannibal, but he still arches in surprise when Alana digs in her fingers and *pulls*, activating the spell. The orange-red glow of the brand flows through the pathway Alana has made with her arms like a snake gliding through the water, settling upon Mason's back. It coils round and round, growing in size as the rest of the brand follows, until it appears in the entirety of its ugly glory, pig and shield and crown, all of it, just as it had been upon Hannibal.

With one major exception of course.

The second Alana removes her hand, Mason *screeches*, loud enough that even Will nearly winces, and fights frantically against the guards like he's entering a second wind.

Will smiles and snaps his fingers at Hannibal. The leash reforms, weaving a pathway back to Will, and Hannibal is already on the move by the time Will tugs impatiently on it. He crawls right back up the dais and lays his head upon Will's lap, adoration in his eyes, and Will winds the leash around his wrist and leans down to kiss his head.

"Well done, pet," Will whispers. He slides a hand down Hannibal's back, thrilled to find it unmarked and smooth. "Now sit. We have more business to finish."

Will straightens and looks back to Mason, who is now quietly whimpering, frozen by the sheer agony and unable to comprehend why. Will decides to enlighten him.

"You branded my pet when you had no right to," Will tells him shortly. "What luck, then, that I found myself in need of a brand to mark you a traitor and a slave! You will carry that brand for the rest of your life, Mason. And that pain you are feeling, like the brand is being pressed against your flesh hot from the fire? You will feel it for every second of every minute of every day for the rest of your miserable life, as a reminder of my kindness at letting you live."

More screams bubble up from Mason's throat, but Will ignores him and turns to the guards. He waves a hand and they begin to drag Mason away.

"I hereby sentence you to hard labor in the mines," Will calls after them. "You will never see the sun again, Mason. Cherish it while you can."

After that, the process is less exciting. The guards drag up each conspirator and their family members, and Will asks the same question and, for the most part, receives the same answer. Most he sentences to hard labor in the mines, alongside Mason, although he takes pity on some of the younger children and merely orders them enslaved for a period of time to some of Will's most trusted lieutenants. If they work hard and are obedient, Will decrees that they can be set free, although they cannot return to Verger Village and, of course, they can never see the guilty conspirator again.

"Do *not* take advantage of my kindness," Will tells each and every one as they are freed from the chains connecting them to those condemned to the mines and instead given heavy collars and placed at the feet of Will's lieutenants. "Or I will punish you with a fate even worse than the mines."

Most agree, very frantically, and the room is cleared of conspirators in short order.

Finally, all that remains is Mason's family – which is to say Mason's sister, Margot, as she is all he has left. She is brought into the room in chains as well, but although she is clearly frightened and tired and starving, she holds her tongue and does not scream insults at him, merely lowering her eyes to the ground when the guards dump her in front of the dais.

"Margot Verger," Will drawls, carding his fingers through Hannibal's hair, "sister of Mason. You stand accused of being aware of the treason Mason was planning, and not stopping him. You stand accused of being involved in the conspiracy to kill me, and not reporting it immediately. You, therefore, stand accused of harming your lord and master. How do you answer?"

"I knew," Margot says softly. "I knew, and I did not stop him, and I did not report him. I could not."

"Any particular reason why?"

Margot raises her head, and Will sees now that she lowered her eyes not out of respect, but to conceal the burning hatred in her eyes, like flames ready to consume all within reach. "How could I, when I was too busy trying to kill him myself?" Margot says.

A hush falls upon the court. Some of Will's guards tense, most of the villagers stare in shock, and Will cocks his head. Even Hannibal stirs under Will's hand to look at Margot, interest emanating from every line in his body.

"He hurt you?" Will asks.

"In every way he could," Margot answers.

Will presses his lips together. On one hand, it makes sense, because Will only ever saw disdain and greed upon Mason's face when he looked at Margot. On the other hand, Will is still her lord and master, and she still could and should have come to him. And of course she might be lying through her teeth. Some humans are good at that.

Will looks to Alana. "Bring me her blood," he commands.

Alana obeys and takes a knife from her belt. She cuts a shallow line up Margot's arm and tilts it to let the blood fall into a cup she conjures from mid-air, and then she steps away and brings the cup to Will. There isn't much inside, only a few drops, but a few drops is all Will needs to taste Margot's memories and the truth that burns inside of her. He closes his eyes, seeing the faint echoes of pain and rage and torture as the blood melts on his tongue, and he understands, for Will killed his sire and maker for the same reason, once upon a time.

Will opens his eyes and looks at Margot. "I feel your pain," he tells her. "But I must ask: why did you not come to me?"

"And trust a man?" Margot scoffs. "Never again."

One of Will's guards aims a sword at her, but Will stills him with a raised hand. He can understand her feelings, even if he doesn't particularly agree with them.

"You are not alone in that sentiment," Will says. "However, that does not erase your crime. Whether or not you distrusted in my ability to punish Mason for mistreating you, you still had a duty to report his treason. You will still face punishment."

Margot lowers her head, weary and bone-tired. "I understand, my Lord."

"Do you? Are you ready for long years of bitter work in the mines or below decks on the ships or baking in the hot sun in the fields?"

"Can't be worse than him."

Will hums, not convinced, but Alana steps forward, concern in her eyes. "I will vouch for her, my Lord," Alana says. "If you will grant me this boon."

Will looks at her, and then looks at Margot, and then looks at Alana again. He'd known, of course, that sometimes she fed from the humans in the villages, but it's one thing to know it and another thing to see the connection that still lingers. Fortunately for Alana, Will is in a kinder mood, given the success of the brand transplant, and so he just sighs.

"Very well." Will turns to Margot. "You are henceforth stripped of your status as a free human in my territory, but out of the kindness of my heart, you will have the ability to regain it. From this day forth, you will belong to the Lady Alana. She will be your mistress in all things, and you will serve her obediently and without flaw, as you should have served me. If she judges you to have learned your lesson and served her well, in five years, you will be freed. Do you accept this punishment, Margot?"

Margot's eyes dart to Alana, and she trembles, ever so slightly. Yet it is not out of fear or mistrust, and it strengthens Will's feeling that he has made the right decision. She bows her head. "Yes, my Lord," Margot whispers.

Will gestures at Alana. "Collar her, Alana. She is yours now, to do with as you like."

Alana bows deeply, a small smile curving her lips. "Thank you very much, my Lord," she says, and strides towards Margot. With a wave of her hand, the chains fall to the ground, to be replaced with a glowing golden collar. Alana also touches Margot's shoulder, and her clothes ripple and change into fresh garments, clean and pristine, with Alana's sigil prominently displayed above her heart. "I have been wanting an assistant. She will do nicely."

Will looks to his guards. "Anyone else? No? Excellent."

He orders the villagers escorted back to the village, under strict guard. They will remain under watch for a year and a day, to ensure that they do not fall back into bad habits, and one of Will's lieutenants will serve as their leader. At the end of their sentence, they will be allowed to choose their own leader again, and trade and roam freely as all the other villages do.

That business concluded, Will's herald approaches with a box of scrolls – likely messages from other vampires or issues to be dealt with – but Will waves it away with a sigh. “Tomorrow,” he tells his advisors and lieutenants. “Today, we have dealt with enough problems. Don't you agree?”

They do agree, because they aren't stupid, and also because Will knows that they will likely take care of anything that truly cannot wait and merely get his approval after the fact tomorrow or whenever Will reconvenes the court. After all, the best part of being lord and master is having the power to delegate as well as make decisions. And besides, they can always go to Alana, as Will knows some of them often do, although he pities the idiot that barges in without knocking and interrupts Alana and Margot having fun.

As his advisors and guards begin to trail out of the court, talking amongst themselves, Will curls his fingers around Hannibal's leash and tugs upwards.

“Come up here, pet,” Will says lazily, patting his lap.

Hannibal obeys, rising to straddle Will's lap. He looks relaxed and drowsy, like a great big cat after a good meal, but he is still attentive enough to adjust himself and not fall when Will spreads the knees Hannibal is straddling. He does, however, bite his lip when Will slides a hand between his now-spread legs to fondle at the ruby buried between them.

“What did you think of your first court session?” Will asks.

“You have . . . an interesting method for determining guilt,” Hannibal says slowly. “Do you always feed from the accused?”

“Hmm, not always. Sometimes guilt is very clear. I have a gift for seeing such things,” Will answers honestly. “But sometimes it is also nice to get definitive proof, and every human can spare a few drops of blood.”

Will presses, very lightly, against the ruby, wondering if he can slide a finger in beside it, and smiles widely when he finds that he indeed can. He smiles even more when Hannibal trembles as he does so, but Hannibal keeps his hands neatly crossed behind his back when Will clicks his tongue in disapproval.

“Control your limbs or I will,” Will warns him. “You were interested in Margot. Why?”

Hannibal shrugs. “I would have set a different fate for her, perhaps.”

“What fate?”

“I would have set her and Mason in a pit, and told her to try, try again.”

Will laughs outright. “What a cruel creature you are!” he says in delight. It's a pretty thought, for sure, and Will can even see it in his mind's eye, Margot and Mason set in a fight to the death, one weapon between them, winner take all. “It's not quite my style, though.”

“Alana will treat her very well. She stank of arousal,” Hannibal sniffs.

“As I said, Margot is Alana’s to do whatever she likes with. If that means pampering, then she will be pampered. So long as Alana keeps her in line, it is no business of mine. Besides. Perhaps it is time for Margot to be treated well.”

“Hmm.”

“You certainly should not be complaining,” Will tells him. “You are treated very well, Hannibal, very well indeed. I’ve seen many pets not treated half as well as you.”

“Paraded naked at court for all to see?” Hannibal challenges.

“I know you enjoyed being shown off,” Will says slyly, crooking his finger to make Hannibal tremble. “I’ve seen worse. I’ve seen them flogged to death, or with their tongues cut out, or with their eyes removed. Sometimes they are even shared amongst the court, tied up at the center of the table for anyone to partake of.”

“Have you participated?”

“Once or twice. Sometimes it’s considered an insult to your host to refuse. And don’t go getting ideas; I have no intention of sharing you with anyone.”

“You offered me to Alana.”

“And that offer will not be repeated.” Will sighs and leans back in his throne. “I’m starting to think you’re feeling neglected, pet, and it’s only been a few hours. Perhaps it’s time to remind you who you belong to, and who you will always belong to. Hmm?”

“You, Master. I belong to you.”

Will tsks. “I think I require more concrete proof.” With the hand holding Hannibal’s leash, he undoes the lacing on his pants, freeing himself with a soft sigh. Then he withdraws the finger alongside the plug, grasps it firmly, and pulls it out altogether, relishing the way Hannibal moans as he does so.

“I have seen pets servicing their masters in public. So I think I have a few things to try out with you. Get yourself lined up and – yes,” he groans as Hannibal slides neatly down onto him. “Good boy. It’s time to go to work.”

Hannibal rides him well for a few thrusts, but then he reaches out with one hand to grasp Will’s shoulder, perhaps for leverage or perhaps because he wants to test Will. Either way, Will slaps him sharply in reprimand and yanks on his leash, forcing Hannibal to stop in place or be choked.

“What,” Will says slowly, “did I say about controlling your limbs?”

“My apologies.”

Will looks at him and sees the complete lack of remorse in his eyes, and sighs. “You know,” he says, “once I saw a lord who had a special pillory constructed in his throne room. His pet was left there day and night, exposed and open for any who wished to have a taste. I’m

starting to think that I should take inspiration from his example, seeing as you are incapable of obeying me and clearly in need of correction. But for now . . .”

Will concentrates and snaps his fingers. Golden threads burst into existence, weaving themselves into ropes that tie Hannibal’s hands behind his back. They even slink further up his arms to tie his elbows together, before reaching his neck and connecting to his collar, so that Hannibal will risk choking himself if he pulls.

“Much better,” Will says in satisfaction. He releases the pressure on Hannibal’s leash and lounges back in his throne. “Now, then. I didn’t say you could stop, pet. You owe me at least two orgasms for that.”

“Yes, Master,” Hannibal sighs, and begins to move again.

“If you keep up this cheek, I am going to gag you as well as lock you in a pillory.”

Epilogue

Will doesn’t give Hannibal much freedom to wander the castle, and not because he keeps him always bound like in the beginning. Mostly it’s just because Will has excellent stamina and an even better appetite, and he does enjoy taking or drinking from Hannibal until he is a whimpering, dazed mess of oversensitivity. This means that, in turn, the hours Will does not spend inside of, mercilessly teasing, or drinking from Hannibal, Hannibal usually spends dozing or sleeping in Will’s chambers, like a giant cat.

Will always returns to find Hannibal waiting for him where he left him, anyways, sometimes alert and eager and sometimes soft and drowsy, but always willing to let Will have his way.

But then Hannibal asks if they might have a little fun outside of their normal places, like the throne room or the courtyard or the high tower or Will’s chambers or the stables or the observatory, and when Will shrugs and agrees, Hannibal leads him down a path Will has never seen before, deep into the caves that Will’s predecessor forced the human slaves to dig out of the earth.

“You’ve been exploring,” Will says flatly.

Hannibal, who is leading the way with a lantern in one hand and his pelt rolled into a bundle under the other, nods. “You did not restrict my movements, Master. So long as I was wearing your collar and your plug to denote who I belonged to.”

Will sighs. Hannibal is forever finding loopholes in his commands, and mostly it’s delightful, but other times, Will is truly tempted to chain Hannibal up again and never let him leave his sight. For example, he could put his brand new pillory on wheels and drag Hannibal around wherever he went. It would be no less than Hannibal deserved, for constant disobedience.

It would also be damn annoying, of course.

“Where are we going, Hannibal?” Will asks instead. He can always punish Hannibal later, given that he is due to receive his next shipment in toys in a few days.

“You’ll see, Master.”

It’s not quite correct, but Will does indeed hear where they are heading in a few moments. The path they are on dips sharply and then plateaus, revealing a lovely little cave. It has a little rippling pool in the center, where the human slaves must have dug deeper than in other places, and the water smells salty and fresh.

Hannibal points towards one end of the cave. “If you follow that path, it eventually leads to the ocean,” he says. “That is where this water comes from. Which means that it is perfectly suited for our fun tonight.”

“Oh? And what exactly is that fun going to be?”

In answer, Hannibal sets the lantern down on the closest flat rock. He lets it sit for a moment, to make sure it won’t topple, and then he unfurls his pelt. Will allowed Hannibal to have access to his pelt again, mostly because the magical binding set deep in his skin won’t allow Hannibal to transform unless Will gives him explicit permission. Besides, sometimes it’s fun to make Hannibal rub against his own pelt and try to come in a set time period or be denied the opportunity altogether.

Hannibal heaves his pelt straight into the center of the pool. Will is startled, but he’s even more startled when it just circles and floats instead of absorbing water and sinking like most clothes will.

“Interesting,” Will says. “Selkie pelts do not sink?”

“Not unless we will them to,” Hannibal explains with a shrug. “And tonight, I wish it to float.”

“Well, now I’m very curious. Do tell, pet. What are you planning for tonight? It better be good. I had planned a very nice session of seeing just how many strikes you could take between your legs from my hand, and I will be very disappointed if you’ve deprived me of that for something . . . lackluster.”

Hannibal sinks to his knees at Will’s feet, and it makes a very pretty picture indeed. He leans forward and nudges between Will’s legs, so that his words are muffled, but Will can still make them out due to his enhanced hearing.

“Do you remember,” Hannibal says, “what we were doing before we were . . . interrupted by Mason?”

“Hmm. I believe you were in the middle of sucking me off.”

“I asked you to let me give you a taste of what you have given me,” Hannibal says steadily. “I would you ask that of you again.”

“You want to try your hand at edging me, pet?”

“Yes.”

“You might lose.”

Hannibal looks up at him and smiles. “You are stronger on land, yes. But the water is my kingdom, Master. I am stronger than you there. In the water, I can truly give you a proper taste of the gift you have so generously given to me.”

“Your flattery is getting better,” Will says dryly. Yet he can’t deny that he is intrigued, for he has never met a being stronger than him, not even Alana. And there is a very lovely soft pelt floating on the water for Will to relax on. “I assume you want me to shed my clothes, then, and lay prettily on your pelt like a maiden on her wedding night?”

Hannibal shrugs and nips at his trousers. “I can do this whether you are clothed or not.”

“I suppose I should give you a fair chance,” Will sighs.

In short order, he divests himself of clothes, leaving them in a tiny bundle on one of the rocks. Then he wades into the pool, glad that with vampire skin, the cold temperature registers but does not unduly disturb him. The pelt is just large enough for Will to ease his shoulders and backside onto, but it leaves his legs dangling in the water and he needs to keep his head elevated.

When Will looks back to the shore, it is empty. Hannibal is, of course, an incurably dramatic pet, with a flair for the theatrical, and so Will is not at all surprised when Hannibal appears out of the water between Will’s spread legs like a shark hunting a meal.

He is surprised when Hannibal does not pause to gloat or challenge Will, though, and instead leans down to take Will into his mouth, sliding down without hesitation until his mouth is pressed flat to Will’s groin.

“That’s – new,” Will groans, throwing his head back. “I see – our practice – is paying – paying off.”

Hannibal’s eyes gleam in the darkness with pleasure, and he begins to thoroughly demonstrate just how well he has learned to service Will with all the aplomb of a well-trained pet. In no time at all, Will is flying towards the cliff of release and is fully ready to throw himself off, given the fact that his refractory period is blessedly next to none, but just at the very last moment, Hannibal abruptly pulls away and sinks below the water, so swiftly and smoothly that there is hardly a ripple to betray his retreat.

“Why you cheeky little,” Will snarls through pants. He raises a hand, ready to snap his fingers and *yank* Hannibal back to where he belongs, but the pelt suddenly begins to move, as though someone below has skillfully spun it in the water. When it is at a brand new angle, Hannibal emerges and again takes Will deep into his mouth.

This time, Will is more than prepared for Hannibal to pull off again, although it takes a great deal of concentration to think through the cloud of pleasure. He still lets Hannibal do it, but when Hannibal resurfaces, Will snaps his fingers immediately, and a coil of thread forms

around Hannibal's ankles so that Will can yank his lower half over Will's chest. Hannibal's legs are too long to rest on the pelt, and Hannibal is distracted enough that the pelt sinks an inch or two into the water, but it's not like Will needs to breathe.

"If you want to play a game, pet, let's play a game with proper stakes," Will purrs directly over where Hannibal is hard and wanting, just to feel Hannibal shudder against his chest. "I will play you, and you will play me, and we shall see who is still standing by the end of it. Or swimming, as it happens. What do you think?"

"I think I will win."

"Bold as ever," Will says in delight.

Then he takes Hannibal in his mouth, uncaring of the fact that cold water seeps around his face, because he isn't foolish enough to give Hannibal the last word. Hannibal trembles again, but it's not like Will hasn't sucked him off before either, and so he recovers quickly enough to take Will back into his mouth and begin the slow, torturous, delicious game.

Will does win, in the end. Hannibal is partially handicapped by the fact that his attention is split three ways – keeping his pelt afloat, enduring Will's torment by mouth and by fingers, and trying to torment Will in return – but Will has his own distractions, such as Hannibal's fingers, the lovely soft pelt against his back, and the water that surrounds them both.

Either way, when someone finally comes and ends up gasping and unable to move any more, it's not Will.

Will wipes at his mouth. "Excellent effort, Hannibal. Truly commendable. But you should remember," Will says affectionately, "that speed and stamina are not the same, and my stamina is no less for being in water. Besides . . . what kind of lord and master would I be if I let you dictate the battleground and automatically cede the victory?"

"A fair one," Hannibal wheezes.

"I've been plenty fair, pet. I made it very clear in the beginning and I have never strayed from what I said: I will have you whenever I want, however I want, wherever I want. Even if the wherever is set by you," Will says, and he leans over to tap Hannibal very gently on the throat, where his lovely collar is a permanent reminder of just who Hannibal belongs to.

Hannibal sighs, quite put out, but he does not protest further, which is better behavior from him than Will normally sees.

"Now then," Will says, turning his attention towards where Hannibal is floating like a duck on the waves, "your lovely efforts have gotten me rather worked up, pet, and seeing as you were given the opportunity to come, I think it's only fair that I get the same opportunity."

He snaps his fingers to conjure up Hannibal's leash, mostly because it's fun to tug on it like he's reeling in a fish. Hannibal did certainly fight him the whole way, just like a fish on the hook would, but he is tamed now, even if he is not broken, and every time Will looks at

Hannibal's lovely body and sees Will's ring and Will's bindings and Will's collar tight upon his throat, a thrill races down his spine and he is eternally grateful that Hannibal fell so beautifully into his lap.

Hannibal heeds the pull of his leash, slipping gracefully through the water with the born aptitude of a selkie until he reaches Will, and they've had sex more than enough times that it's almost instinct for Hannibal to spread his legs and wrap them around Will's waist and sink down until he has taken Will all the way. He even begins to move without any prompting from Will at all, although Will keeps a tight hold on the leash to prevent any more little games.

"And to think," Will says, watching the way Hannibal's throat gleams with sweat and his eyes glaze over and his thighs tremble, "that no one in your entire life ever looked at you and knew your worth until I found you. What a tragedy. You were born for my collar."

Hannibal bares his teeth, even as he speeds up. "I am not a mindless animal to take any man's yoke."

Will laughs and pets at Hannibal's side, up to his lovely throat and down his equally lovely chest. "Ah, but we are all animals, in the end, aren't we? We are born to eat and fight and laugh and make love until we can't, and death comes a-calling."

"Is that what we are doing? Making love?"

"You'd rather I call it something else?"

Hannibal pauses and looks at him. Will senses no anger from him, no aggression or anxiety, merely that sly, slippery sense of a snake testing the boundaries, as the Serpent must have, long ago, in the Garden of the Creator. The part of Hannibal that is forever chomping at the bit and wriggling against Will's restraints and searching for loopholes. The mind that Will loves so dearly, and yet also sometimes wants to crack open and swallow whole, so that Hannibal might never ever be able to leave him, not even in death, and never mind that Will's digestion cannot process anything but blood.

Hannibal leans close, nose twitching, and says very softly, "You don't even kiss me. Not since that day. I was under the impression that people in love kiss."

It's amusing to Will, in a way. A child's imagination of love, perfect and shiny and idealized, two people kissing politely and doing nothing else. How could Will express his love for Hannibal more than he already has, with his extensive latitude for Hannibal's disobedience and his specially made collar and the hours upon hours he spends with – and increasing inside of – Hannibal?

That being said, it's by no means a difficult request to fulfill.

"Aww," Will says. "Are you feeling unloved because I do not kiss you, Hannibal? Where would you prefer I do that? Upon your fingers, perhaps?" So saying, he pulls Hannibal's hand to his mouth and lays a dainty kiss there, as a knight might upon a queen's hand. "Or upon your chest?" He leans forward, scraping a fang over Hannibal's nipple to feel him

shudder, before he settles upon Hannibal's collarbone and lays a kiss there. "Or perhaps where you want my attention most of all, where we first touched?"

Hannibal stops the journey of Will's hand downwards, eyes serious. He leans forward, until their foreheads press together, and closes his eyes.

"You know where," he says, voice so soft no human could ever hear him.

And Will does know, because how could he not? It's the one place he never usually does kiss his pets, because it's one thing to feed from his pets or thrust deep inside of them, but it's quite another to exchange kisses.

"You know, in the old days," Will replies, "that was how bargains were struck and promises were sealed and unions were made, from the highest of kings to the lowest of slaves."

"I am aware."

"You wish to enter into a union with me?"

Hannibal opens one eye. The lantern has long since died out, and even though Will has excellent eyes there is little to see, really, in this big cave. Little to see except Hannibal, his beloved pet, so beautiful and wild and *his*.

"Whenever, however, wherever: I am yours," Hannibal says, "and you are mine. Is that not a union?"

And, well. He's not wrong. Will knew long ago that he would kill for Hannibal and never kill him, even when Hannibal was being petty and silent and utterly, utterly disobedient. Their lives were bound together from the first moment they laid eyes upon each other.

"Whenever, however, wherever: You are mine," Will agrees, reaching up to cradle Hannibal's face, "and I am yours. Let us make the union."

"Let us make the union," Hannibal echoes.

And then they seal it with a kiss, as in the old days, and Will knows then that he will never have another pet so long as he exists, for Hannibal is as much a part of him as he is a part of Hannibal, and let the world just try and tear them apart. He wonders, distantly, if one day the humans might tell stories about them, as they tell stories of the first humans in the Garden or the great war between the humans and the vampires.

Stories of the vampire lord and his pet selkie.

FINIS

End Notes

A/N: After that, Will and Hannibal continue to have sex all over the castle at all times of day and night, no matter who happens to walk by. Hannibal gets used to being naked and pre- or post-orgasm almost constantly. Will gets used to being constantly distracted by his lovely pet and having a nice, full belly. And Alana and Margot have equally great sex, and Alana does set her free eventually but Margot chooses to stay with her magical murderwife.

I'm also tentatively thinking of a sequel? At the very least some extra scenes. I have a few deleted ones I just ran out of time to include, because y'all this was supposed to be 8-10k and it is very much not. Like when I ran [the poll on Twitter](#) and "edging" won, my original idea was just Will jerking himself off with Hannibal's selkie skin and uh. it grew legs. about 28k of them. ~~i have no self control anymore~~

Go check out the rest of the BottomHannibalDay tag through the collection or on Twitter!
Stay safe and have fun <3

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